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Jacob Burckhardt
And The
Renaissance:
Hundred Years After



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Der Staat als Kunstwerk.

Im wahren Sinne des Wortes führt diese Schrift den Titel eines bloßen Versuches, und der Verfasser ist sich deutlich genug bewußt, daß er mit sehr mäßigen Mitteln und Kräften sich einer überaus großen Aufgabe unterzogen hat. Aber **Jacob Burckhardt** and the **Renaissance** 100 Years After eine Forschung umblicken konnte, so wäre ihm der Beifall der Kenner kaum sicherer. Die wichtigsten Merkmale einer Culturepoche geben vielleicht für jedes Auge ein verschiedenes Bild, und wenn es sich um die Renaissance handelt, welche als nächste Mutter der unsrigen noch jetzt fortwirkt, so muß sich das subjektive Urtheilen und Empfinden jeden Augenblick beim Denken wie beim Leben bewegen. Auf dem weiten Meere in welches wir uns hinauswagen, sind der möglichen Wege und Richtungen viele, und leicht könnten dieselben Studien, welche für diese Arbeit gemacht wurden, unter den Händen eines Andern nicht nur eine ganz andere Benützung und Behandlung erfahren, sondern auch zu wesentlich verschiedenen Schlüssen Anlaß geben. Der Gegenstand an sich wäre wichtig genug, um noch viele Bearbeitungen wünschbar zu machen, Forscher der verschiedensten Standpunkte zum Reden aufzufordern. Einstweilen sind wir zufrieden, wenn uns ein geduldiges Gehör gewährt und dieses Buch als ein Ganzes aufgefaßt wird. Es ist die wesentlichste Schwierigkeit der Culturgeschichte, daß sie

Cultur der Renaissance.

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Front cover: The first page of the first edition of
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Jacob Burckhardt and the Renaissance

100 Years After

Papers on the great historian read at the meeting of the Central Renaissance Conference celebrating the centenary of the publication of DIE CULTUR DER RENAISSANCE IN ITALIEN held at The University of Kansas, April 28-30, and a catalogue of an exhibition of Renaissance art from the University's art collections organized in honor of the Conference.



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FOREWORD

The 1960 meeting of the Central Renaissance Conference provides an opportunity to honor the work of the great Swiss historian, Jacob Burckhardt, who, just one hundred years ago, published the first edition of his most famous book, THE CIVILIZATION OF THE RENAISSANCE IN ITALY. Though he modestly called it an "essay," it proved to be epoch-making in the study of the Renaissance. But Burckhardt has other claims to fame as well. He was an important figure in the field of art history, in which his best known book is the CICERONE. His REFLECTIONS ON HISTORY have gained him recognition as one of the most original historical thinkers of his age, and are still being widely studied. With all of this, he was an extraordinary personality, whose outlook and feelings are deeply embedded in his works. The four papers printed here, prepared to be read at the conference, explore some of the many facets of this remarkable and versatile man, and attempt to show that his work is still worthy of careful consideration by present-day students. The catalogue of the exhibition held at the University Museum of Art, also published here, presents the holdings of the University's art collection pertinent to Burckhardt's great field of inquiry, and certainly reflects his influence on current thinking on the subject of Renaissance art.



THE CONTINUING UTILITY OF BURCKHARDT'S THOUGHT ON RENAISSANCE POLITICS

My choice of subject for this panel is the continuing utility of some of Jacob Burckhardt's thinking on Renaissance political history. For I think it can be demonstrated that much of what is most interesting in contemporary work on Renaissance politics, is either inspired by or runs parallel to, ideas and methods developed by Burckhardt. We should remember, to begin with, that Burckhardt did think about political history. The fragments of his lectures which have been published deal with political topics as often as not.¹ And Part I of his classic essay, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, the centennial of whose publication we honor during this year and in this panel, is focused on politics. That Part I is often labelled by students of Burckhardt as political background for what is primarily an essay in cultural history.² But this is to do it an injustice. For it contains ideas about Renaissance politics which are important and provocative in themselves. Of these ideas, the central one, which serves as a theme for the entire section, is his famous claim that in Renaissance Italy the state became, for the first time, a "work of art." By this Burckhardt meant that in Renaissance Italy one finds developing a new spirit of rational calculation in politics. This new spirit took various forms within various Italian governments: it produced deliberate and ruthless seizure and control of absolute power in such despots as the rulers of fifteenth-century Milan; it produced collection and use of social statistics among such oligarchic cliques as the rulers of Renaissance Venice; it produced planning of government structure by elaborate constitutions in the fertile minds of such Renaissance intellectuals as the Florentine Niccolo Machiavelli. This new spirit also shaped relations between Italian states of the Renaissance: in peace it produced a tough-minded, intricate new diplomacy; in war it produced fighting forces and methods which were almost entirely mercenary.

A more modern way of stating this argument might be to say that in Renaissance Italy one finds the development of a new professionalism in politics. This new professionalism is primarily a matter of attitude, rather than of status. It is a product of a basic change in assumptions, a change from the assumption that politics is but part of a divine plan or of a natural order, to the assumption that politics is an autonomous product of conscious, rational calculation by human beings. This new political assumption, accompanied by a decline in effective claims for central power, led to the belief that the individual Italian state was itself autonomous, or "sovereign." And these attitudes logically led rulers to make political decisions in ways which were more single-minded, more serious, or more "professional." For the formation and implementation of these decisions, rulers would furthermore logically turn to new types of political assistants: they would turn away from men whose loyalties and responsibilities were divided among a variety of entities of a feudal, ecclesiastical, or more abstract nature; they would turn to men who were trained and employed solely for political action in the service of a single state—to men who were, in short, "professionals."

Burckhardt's approach to political history was, of course, new in his time. It marked a sharp departure from the dramatic narrative type of political history which, in the hands of such artists of the genre as his teacher Ranke, Michelet,

Macaulay, and Bancroft, dominated the historians' guild and attracted the interest and enthusiasm of the general literate public. In contrast, Burckhardt's approach to political history was analytical, schematic, reflective. It depended for its documentation much less on the usual kind of state papers, much more on the reports of contemporary writers and the intuitions of contemporary artists. And it has, as it was used by Burckhardt, certain weaknesses obvious to the modern historian. It does not exercise the precision of the research techniques developed since 1860 by such institutions as the *Ecole des Chartes*. It does not use the insights and the tools of such relatively new disciplines as economic history. And it does not benefit from the masses of unpublished materials, on all kinds of subjects—particularly Italian subjects, which are only now being dug out of the archives. It is, therefore, hardly surprising that Burckhardt's interpretation of Italian Renaissance politics has been roundly and frequently questioned, challenged, modified, and attacked in this century. What is surprising is that the interpretation is still with us, that it still provokes controversy, and that it still seems to stimulate fresh thought and research. The last proposition is one which I want now to examine in some detail.

Two lines of contemporary American research seem to me to reveal the continuing utility of Burckhardt's suggestive study of Italian Renaissance politics. One concentrates on institutions and uses some of his concepts; the other concentrates on ideas and uses some of his methods. To illustrate the institutional approach, I would like to direct your attention to work by Garrett Mattingly and one of his students. To illustrate the approach through ideas, I would like to direct your attention to work by Hans Baron and one of his protégés.

Garrett Mattingly is particularly interested in Renaissance diplomatic institutions. His picture of them is drawn in part from documents of the literary sort which Burckhardt favored—such as Barbaro's *De officio legati*. But it seems to depend more on close study of the state papers which are dear to the heart of the narrative historian. The results of Mattingly's research tend to support Burckhardt's argument that the Italian Renaissance was a period of important innovation in politics, and that this innovation involved a growth of political artistry or "professionalism." Such support one finds in particularly striking form in Mattingly's important 1937 article in *Speculum* on the first resident embassies.³ Here he stated in relatively pure form an argument developed later in a more leisurely, more generalized, and more elegant fashion, in his book, *Renaissance Diplomacy*.⁴ Mattingly's argument begins by contending that the institution of the resident ambassador is critically important as a symbol of the absolute sovereignty of the modern state. The first establishment of resident ambassadors by any given state, therefore, is as good a test as any for "modernity," for the emergence of that state from what is called the "Middle Ages" into the modern state system.

While many scholars used to argue that the system of resident ambassadors was a creation of the seventeenth century, and others have insisted that it was derived from classical antiquity or medieval church practice, a substantial number of modern scholars now believe it to be a creation of Renaissance Italy. It is with this latter group of historians that Mattingly aligns himself, and to their argument he brings new precision. He makes it clear that the new resident am-

bassador was a professional diplomat rather than an extraordinary envoy sent for a special purpose; his task was to maintain regular good relations with a specified foreign power rather than to resolve some specific problem; he was supervised continuously by a permanent foreign ministry and chancery in his home state rather than casually by some member of a feudal household; and his supreme loyalty was to his state rather than to Christendom as a whole. The first of these new resident ambassadors Mattingly finds quite specifically in a man who was sent by the Gonzaga of Mantua to the imperial court of Louis the Bavarian in 1341. The first regular exchange of resident ambassadors between two states, he finds developing between the Gonzaga of Mantua and the Visconti of Milan, beginning about 1375 and lasting at least until 1379, perhaps until 1390. And the general and accepted practice of the exchange of resident ambassadors, he finds established among all the Italian states of any significance, in the years following the Peace of Lodi in 1454. These specific discoveries result from a careful reading of published collections of diplomatic documents drawn from the archives of Mantua and Milan, and edited by Luzio and Osio.⁵ As Mattingly admits, they could well be modified in detail and antedated by careful multi-archival research of a sort which has yet to be attempted in Italy's rich manuscript collections. But it will take more than new Italian dates and details to shake Mattingly's basic claim—that in these early Italian residents we find the first modern ambassadors, to whom diplomacy is a profession and in whom loyalty to the state is the highest virtue. And until evidence of a radically new sort appears, we can, it seems to me, accept these findings as confirmations and elaborations of Burckhardt's insight.

Another set of Renaissance political institutions which have recently attracted scholarly interest are those which governed cities. A study of one group of them, the governing councils of the city of Siena, has been included in a recent doctoral dissertation prepared for Columbia University by David Hicks, who studied under Mattingly.⁶ The full subject of this dissertation is the rise of Pandolfo Petrucci to supreme power in Siena at the end of the fifteenth century. It is based on a skillful, fresh, and thorough study of unpublished archival materials in Siena, Florence, and Milan. The part of the dissertation which is of particular importance to my present argument deals with a Siennese institution called the *Balià*.⁷ *Balie*, which at first were special commissions charged with resolving special problems, had been appointed sporadically since the high middle ages by the frequently changing governing bodies of Siena. But just as special ambassadors became resident and "professional," so the *balià* became a regular and permanent part of the Siennese government. This development becomes clear by about 1400. It receives legal sanction in 1455. And for the next century, Siena was ruled effectively by a permanent and professional governing *balià*—which finally seems to have brought stability and rational direction to what had been the vacillating and erratic government of a bewildering congeries of councils and parties, all representing vague or alleged socio-economic interests, all clearly amateur. At times the Siennese *balie* were reasonably representative of relatively decentralized power groups. At times they were effectively controlled by a strong man like Pandolfo Petrucci. Even Pandolfo's control, however, remained indirect. He ruled by techniques which reveal rational calculation of a rather sordid sort,

which remind one of the techniques of corruption and terror used by the modern American city boss and the modern American syndicate gangster. Before, during, and after Pandolfo's rise, however, legal power remained in the *balià* and was exercised by it. And the decisions of the *balià* consistently seem to represent calculations of what its leading members thought would protect the Siennese state during the continuing political crises provoked by French intervention in Italy.

Balie were not limited to Siena. Hicks suggests that one could find interesting parallels in contemporary Florence and Orvieto.⁸ And he suggests further that this institution may have been the republican response to the growing need felt all over Europe for more powerful and more centralized government—a need which in other parts of Italy was being met by the rise of centralized petty despotisms, and in northern Europe by the rise of centralized monarchies. I would suggest that these fifteenth-century balie provided yet another example of a new professionalism in politics and of what Burckhardt called politics as a “work of art.”

Quite a different illustration of the utility of Burckhardt's approach to Renaissance politics can be found in the second line of research I would like to follow, the line which approaches Renaissance politics through ideas, and whose most distinguished contemporary practitioner is Hans Baron. This line of research depends for its novelty less on new content than on refined method, less on fresh archival discoveries than on extraction of new meaning from literary manuscripts and books. Many of these materials are already widely known. Some, indeed, were used by Burckhardt himself. But they are now being utilized in a new and more critical way. The new method may be said to consist of two parts: reconstruction of context and technical study of the documents themselves. Reconstruction of context requires careful establishment of a precise chronology of political events. Technical study of the documents demands a display of difficult bibliographical techniques which, in Baron's hands, can be dazzling in its erudition and most revealing in its results.

Baron's method is not, of course, entirely new to the world of scholarship. It has been used with telling effect in such fields as the study of the classics. The application of the method to Renaissance history may have been the suggestion of Walter Goetz, the great German historian who was Baron's teacher.⁹ Goetz, one should note, was a significant admirer and interpreter of Burckhardt in his own right. He might be regarded as a living link between Burckhardt and Baron.

Relations between the work of Burckhardt and of Baron can perhaps best be demonstrated with an example. A particularly neat one is provided by their treatments of the Discourses of the Venetian Doge Tommaso Mocenigo. Discussion of these texts occupies small but vital parts of the arguments of both men. The Discourses of Mocenigo apparently were drafted during the early fifteenth century, to provide grounds for Venetian rejection of Florentine overtures for a republican alliance against the aggressive designs of despotic Milan. They contain a peculiar mixture of political analysis, anti-Florentine invective, Biblical and theological invocations, and social statistics. It is this last ingredient of the Discourses which Burckhardt seized upon.¹⁰ Mocenigo's precise figures on the Venetian Republic's financial resources, the numbers of the different kinds of ships she owned, the numbers of the different types of sailors who manned them, and other matters of this sort, all seemed to Burckhardt to be ideal evidence of

the economic and statistical form which he felt the Renaissance spirit of rational political calculation took in Venice. Baron also admires these statistics, and notes, in passing, their surprising accuracy.¹¹ But his total attitude toward Mocenigo's Discourses is more complex, more considered, and more critical. In fact careful analysis of the texts, using the tools of both internal and external criticism, convinces him that parts of these discourses are forgeries—specifically the invectives against Florence and the theological passages. What remains as a reliable source still has more in it for him than it did for Burckhardt. In addition to statistics, Baron finds expressed here an interesting political isolationism, a reluctance to become involved in the quarrels between other city-states for fear that involvement might divert or dam the golden tides of Venetian commerce. And by examining the contemporary political context closely, Baron finds this isolationism to be a policy losing repute, stated almost literally in the last gasps of a dying elder statesman, about to be replaced by the vigorous pro-republican and anti-despotic interventionism of young Francesco Foscari, who became Mocenigo's successor as Doge. By use of this method, then, Baron has painted with Burckhardt's materials a picture which is richer and subtler, but not radically different. Mocenigo still calculates his political program rationally, but his calculations are more complex. And other Venetians, like Foscari, after making rational calculations of a different order, urge a political program which is very new but directed toward the same old goal—the strength of the Venetian state. Baron's picture is also surprisingly relevant to modern concerns. Few of us are too young to be unable to remember the agony caused by quarrels between isolationists and interventionists in a similarly wealthy and complacent state, some years ago.

We can hardly expect, at this early date, to find many applications by others of Baron's techniques. There are some, however. One which particularly interests me can be found in a doctoral dissertation prepared for the History Department of the State University of Iowa. It is Donald Weinstein's study of Savonarola and the Florentine humanists.¹² Material from it was used for an article published recently in *Church History*.¹³ The study as a whole is now being prepared for publication as a book. At the heart of Weinstein's dissertation is a meticulous examination of Savonarola's sermons. It sets these sermons both against the chronology of political events in contemporary Florence and against the comments of the great Florentine humanists who became, most of them, Savonarola's friends and disciples.

Now one does not normally think of a study of sermons as a contribution to political history. One is not surprised to find Burckhardt including the bulk of his analysis of Savonarola in the part of his classic essay devoted to religion and morality.¹⁴ And Weinstein's study is really more a contribution to the history of Renaissance millenarianism than to that of Renaissance politics. Yet what made Savonarola's sermons distinctive was their political impact. The invariably dramatic and occasionally accurate prophecies which were Savonarola's sermon stock in trade, won him a devoted following among the Florentine populace. With this devoted following, he changed the pattern of Florence's alliance, altered the structure of the city's government, and embroiled her deeply with the Borgian Papacy. Until recently, most scholars who thought about the matter seem to have regarded as accidental or fortuitous these political results of a religious mis-

sion. To them the monk's rise to power must be explained externally, by reference to the catastrophic events following upon Charles VIII's invasion of Italy: Savonarola was surely too pious and too innocent of worldly concerns to have won power by calculation. Weinstein's analysis of Savonarola's sermons, however, has uncovered one fact which complicates this view: Savonarola's prophecies do not remain as fixed and as structured as those common to such traditions as the one established by Joachim of Fiore; Savonarola's prophecies changed, and changed quite abruptly. These changes, furthermore, coincided strikingly with important political events. The terrifying invasion of Charles VIII, the sudden collapse of Medici power, the peaceful withdrawal of the French, all are accompanied by changes in Fra Girolamo's prophecies. These changes are normally found, it is true, in modifications of the prophetic message rather than in specific allusions to specific events. But when one thinks about them, one discovers that each new prophecy fits the new needs of the rulers of Florence remarkably well. And this fact in turn suggests that Savonarola did indeed make political calculations, calculations designed to sway public opinion. No doubt he discovered his power over the public by accident, and used it with sincerity. That is often true of demagogues. But once he had his power, he may have used it with deliberation and calculation, in support of the Florentine state and of his own role within it.

These discoveries, it seems to me, bring us back to Burckhardt in a new and interesting way. For do we not have here a new kind of political artist? May we not join to his gallery of statesmen as despots, as statisticians, and as constitution-builders, the statesman as demagogue? Perhaps intensive study of the political implications of medieval preaching would provide precedents for Savonarola's practice. But the possibility that a kind of calculated political demagoguery may have been an innovation of the Italian Renaissance, seems to me to be intriguing. It is just the sort of possibility which modern scholars in a democratic state could appreciate and explore.

Burckhardt, of course, cannot be given full credit for stimulating all the historical research which I have been discussing. Yet it can be demonstrated that all the historians I have mentioned know Burckhardt's work. Some of them would even acknowledge a considerable debt to him. All of them, it seems to me, are to some extent within his tradition. And this, I would suggest, demonstrates that Burckhardt's thinking about Italian Renaissance political history is still useful and vital.

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1. Jacob Burckhardt, *Judgments on history and historians*, translated by Harry Zohn (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958). For information on critical editions, in German of course, see translator's preface, pp. xxiii-xxiv.

2. See, for example, Wallace K. Ferguson, *The Renaissance in Historical Thought* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Houghton Mifflin, 1948), p. 189, and Werner Kaegi, *Jacob Burckhardt, eine biographie*, Band III, *Die Zeit der Klassischen Werke* (Basel & Stuttgart: Benno Schwabe & Co., 1956), pp. 706 ff. Both of these outstanding experts on Burckhardt do describe briefly, it must be conceded, his theory of the state as a "work of art." Neither, however, takes the space to explore the theory very far.

3. Garret Mattingly, "The first resident embassies: mediaeval Italian origins of modern diplomacy," *Speculum*, XII (October, 1937), No. 4, pp. 423-439.

4. Garrett Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1955).

5. A. Luzio, *L'Archivio Gonzaga di Mantova* (Verona, 1922), and L. Osio, ed., *Documenti diplomatici tratti dagli archivi milanesi* (Milan, 1864), cited in Mattingly's book, p. 304. Cf. notes in Mattingly's article, pp. 427-429.

6. David L. Hicks, "The rise of Pandolfo Petrucci," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1959.

7. *Ibid.*, *passim.*, but particularly pp. 22-26.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 22, n. 1, refers for evidence to Daniel Walcy, *Mediaeval Orvieto* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1952), p. xxii, and A. Anzilotti, "Per la storia delle signorie e del diritto pubblico italiano del Rinascimento," in *Movimenti e contrasti per l'unità italiana* (Bari, 1930), pp. 25-26.

9. For one suggestion of this connection see Hans Baron's dedication to his *The Crisis of the early Italian Renaissance: civic humanism and republican liberty in an age of classicism and tyranny* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1955), 2 vols. Hereafter cited as Baron, *Crisis*. Cf. Ferguson, *op. cit.*, pp. 226-229, on Goetz and Baron.

10. Jacob Burckhardt, *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien*, durchgesehen von Walter Goetz (Leipzig: Alfred Kröner, 1928, 18th auflage), p. 68. More recent critical editions were not available to me. The standard English translation is that of S. G. C. Middlemore. It has been published in a number of editions. Hereafter cited as Burckhardt, *Renaissance*.

11. Hans Baron, ch. IX, "The anti-Florentine Discourses of the Doge Tommaso Mocenigo (1422-1423)," *Humanistic and political literature in Florence and Venice at the beginning of the quattrocento: studies in criticism and chronology* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1955), pp. 185-215. For specific evidence of the accuracy of Mocenigo's statistics, Baron refers in n. 5, p. 187, to G. Luzzatto, "Sull'attendibilità di alcune statistiche economiche medievali," *Giornale degli Economisti*, ser. IV, vol. LIX (1929). On Baron's treatment of Mocenigo, see also Baron, *Crisis*, I, 341-343, with notes in II, 602-605.

12. Donald Weinstein, "Prophecy and humanism in late fifteenth century Florence: a study in the relations between Savonarola and the Florentine humanists," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, State University of Iowa, 1957. Note especially ch. III, "The Prophecy of Savonarola."

13. Donald Weinstein, "Savonarola, Florence, and the Millenarian Tradition," *Church History*, XXVII, No. 4 (December, 1958), pp. 291-305.

14. Burckhardt, *Renaissance*, pp. 448-454.



REFLECTIONS ON EARLY AND LATE HUMANISM

Burckhardt's Morality and Religion

Jacob Burckhardt himself would certainly never have participated in a Renaissance Conference of this kind, since he felt that true scholars should stay home and work "instead of congregating at conventions to sniff each other like dogs in a pack." He himself "never hawked his lectures beyond the gates of Basle," for, "lectures, if they are what they ought to be, cost nervous energy."¹ Least of all would he have attended a session in his honor, for in his day he was most adept at sidestepping such notice and recognition as came his way in the form of offers from Berlin or visitors from America. He felt only disdain for those *viri doctissimi* who edit or reflect on every snip of paper scribbled by some great man. But he is gone and is no longer able to guard the privacy which in life he was always anxious to preserve, so that we may with impunity proceed with a business that would have been most distasteful to him. We are, after all, not relentless revisionists but friends, come not to bury but to praise him.

Herbert Butterfield names Burckhardt, together with Lord Acton and von Ranke as one of the three historians who have provoked more discussion and research in recent years than any others because of their historical ideas, principles of interpretation, comments on the process of things in time, and a certain prophetic element.² Burckhardt's place in this triad may at first glance seem problematical, for his own reflections on history were as deliberately unsystematic as Kierkegaard's philosophical fragments. He chose history over philosophy precisely because of his talent for visual rather than reflective perception. At twenty he wrote that it was an acknowledged fact that he was "anything but a born thinker" and was "muddle-headed." "People have assured me so often," he wrote, "of my incapacity to think, that in the end I have come to believe it myself, and at times even *console* myself with the thought. . . ."³ "What I build up historically is not the result of criticism and speculation, but on the contrary, of imagination, which fills up the lacunae of contemplation. History, to me, is always poetry for the greater part, a series of the most beautiful artistic compositions," he wrote already in 1842.⁴ He later conceded to Nietzsche: "I have never been capable of pursuing problems such as yours, nor even of understanding the premises clearly. I have never, my whole life long, been philosophically minded, and even the past history of philosophy is more or less a closed book to me."⁵ This is the historian whose essay *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, now in its centennial year, Lord Acton pronounced "the most penetrating and subtle treatise on the history of civilization that exists in literature."⁶ He had in full measure those three qualities which according to that semi-professional Lytton Strachey are necessary to the writing of history—a capacity for absorbing facts, a capacity for stating them, and a point of view.⁷ His point of view on humanism and religion is the subject proposed for consideration here.

Burckhardt's one successful book, so slow in gaining recognition, created a grand new historical concept, that of Italy as the "first born among the sons of modern Europe" and the Renaissance as the "leader of modern ages."⁸ Whiggish readers of history with the love of their own modernity have come to his Italy with

the curiosity and nostalgia of a successful business man visiting the small town of his youth. Here was born the greatness yet in evidence all around. Burckhardt, however, while he described what he saw, saw far more than he described in this essay. Particularly his *Weltgeschichtliche Betrachtungen* and the *Briefwechsel* reveal his generalized insights into historical trends which he merely cites as instantialized particulars in his study of the Renaissance. The common assumption that "Burckhardtianism" must imply enthusiasm for the Renaissance and depreciation of the medieval period misjudges both Burckhardt's historical sense and his much attenuated regard for modernity. The final chapter of his essay, on morality and religion, provides the most sensitive test of Burckhardt's value judgment on early humanism, an assessment highly conditioned by Burckhardt's own late humanism.

Burckhardt, like Johannes von Müller and Leopold von Ranke, in the two generations preceding, was born in a parsonage and in due course undertook theological studies. His father, who had studied at Heidelberg during the ascendant influence of Schleiermacher's theology, was attached to the Basle minister and rose to become the dean of the cathedral. Burckhardt always considered his own archimedean point outside events to be his traditional view of life with its inner harmony, security, and sense of the frailty of all earthly things, which he owed to his familial background.⁹ Burckhardt's own theological studies at Basle ran aground on the shoals of nineteenth century liberalism and the higher criticism of De Wette, who introduced the concept of myth in Biblical exegesis. He salvaged only a general belief in Providence, in the sum of Christ's teachings as the law of love and sacrifice for others, and the resolve to be at least an honest heretic.¹⁰ Like Kierkegaard, and for many of the same reasons, he developed criticality toward orthodoxy and a positive aversion to liberal theology and Hegelian philosophies of faith. The theology of the time was not sufficiently aware of the individual, of wickedness, and death to instruct a Burckhardt whose clear eye saw these things all too well. The D. F. Strauss affair in Zürich elicited from him a hearty "plague on both your houses" and it must be conceded that there was little to choose between the "great" Alexander Schweizer and little David Strauss.¹¹ This mean wrangle convinced him that the best days of Christianity were behind it, though it was as yet not clear to him in what form religion would once again appear.¹²

Nineteenth century academic theology witnessed the undignified retreat of the "wisest heads" to the study of history where religion could be examined at a safe distance as a gentle exercise without fear of personal engagement. Burckhardt fell very naturally into this pattern, for the study of history resolved for him on one level an acute inner conflict. Like Kierkegaard, Burckhardt, too, faced the either/or of worldliness or unworldliness, not the sensate or the religious life, but "complete worldliness in the manner of seeing and doing everything" and the unworldliness of ascetic scholarship devoted in love and sacrifice to the cultural development of mankind. In history he found a remedy against the demon of worldliness. Moreover, it provided the first shock that unseated his fatalism and the *Weltanschauung* he was coming to base upon it. He somewhat naively recorded that his eyes opened wide with astonishment at the first lectures he heard by Ranke, Droysen, and Böckh, for he realized that the same thing had befallen

him as befell the Knight in Don Quixote. He had loved his science on hearsay, and suddenly here it was appearing before him in gigantic propositions and he had to lower his eyes.¹³ Unlike Gibbon, who could never have gotten himself to use the diminutive term, Burckhardt chose as his special field of research—Asia Minor.

Burckhardt became a thoroughly unworldly figure. A professional savant, hair white at forty, he lived as a lonely bachelor in spartan quarters with books, music and art as his only solace. In the increasingly materialistic culture of the day, he spoke of himself as a “*Spätling*,” one born out of due time. He felt the need to be rooted in historical ground and for that reason, except for his escapes to Italy, remained sheltered within the walls of Basle under the shadow of the cathedral where Erasmus lay buried. He never learned to appreciate Americans, for Americans, like barbarians, have no history and their material success derives from the Anglo-American compromise between Calvinistic pessimism in theory and ceaseless money-making in practice.¹⁴ That this sensitive retiring scholar should have been so powerfully attracted to lusty vigorous *Quattrocento* marks an interesting, if perhaps predictable, psychological inversion. Friedrich Nietzsche and Conrad Ferdinand Meyer were seldom more wrong than when they claimed Burckhardt for their type of Renaissancism. He never “worshipped” men of power, though they held a certain fascination for him, and he could not resist gazing into their evil eye.

To Burckhardt, as to his eighteenth century predecessors, man was the measure of things. But the frame of mind with which he left the study of man and his past was not much different from that with which he began, and it was hardly flattering to man. “We, however, shall start out,” he wrote, “from the one point accessible to us, the one eternal center of all things—man, suffering, striving, doing, as he is and was and ever shall be. Hence our study will, in a certain sense, be pathological in kind.”¹⁵ Three basic psychological motifs characterized Burckhardt’s late humanism, skepticism, pessimism, and resignation. A century earlier the enlightened optimistic Isaac Iselin had flourished in this same Basle.

Burckhardt the historian recognized that “true skepticism has its indisputable place in a world where beginnings and end are all unknown, and the middle in constant flux.”¹⁶ He did not intend with his true skepticism to completely relativize timeless values, least of all the beautiful. Nor did his skepticism turn on him like Saturn to devour its child. He never fell victim to the *ressentiment* of Nietzsche, who to the end believed Burckhardt’s traditional Christian residue and quiet scholarly way of life was a mask for an underlying cynicism.

Temperamentally Burckhardt enjoyed a small measure of optimism, but theoretically he was basically pessimistic and for him the world was not only transient but evil. Nietzsche claimed that Burckhardt confidentially referred to Schopenhauer as “our philosopher.”¹⁷ Because of the corruption of the human heart the end of man would perhaps not need to be regretted. In 1871 he referred to his forthcoming lecture “on Fortune and Misfortune in History” with the comment that he proposed to discuss as smoothly as possible the impropriety, in most cases, of the term “good fortune,” and conclude as comfortingly as possible so as to reconcile people to fate.¹⁸ This lecture was no accolade to human progress, for he denied both intellectual and moral progress in the period known to history.

His advice was to forget happiness and concern about fortune or misfortune and to take knowledge and the quest of wisdom as the goal. In his *Weltgeschichtliche Betrachtungen* he concluded sadly that in his day the sense of honor which was the last bulwark against evil no longer offered much hope. The literary historian Adolf Frey said that he heard no expression from Burckhardt oftener than: "eine böse Welt!" His successor and heir in art history at Basle remarked that Burckhardt frequently broke into a conversation with the cry "*O vanitas, o vanitatum vanitas.*" "I have never been unhappy," he wrote to Gottfried Kinkel in 1844, "but I am and remain unfortunate."¹⁹ Some of the most moving pages of his *Griechische Kulturgeschichte* are those on which he describes the pervasiveness of pessimism and the triumph of *Moira*. Then the sophist Antiphon pleaded that life should not be exalted as great and elevated, since everything is small, weak, short, and mixed with misery. From moderate Aristotle came these dreadful words: "What is man? A true mark of weakness, the prey of the moment, a toy of fortune, a picture of sudden change, now subject more to envy, now more to misfortunes; the rest is slime and gall."²⁰

Like the young Montaigne, Burckhardt's humanism was thoroughly aristocratic, but unlike Montaigne he never learned to appreciate the common man even in later life. He shared this attitude with various contemporaries who were disgusted with the spectacle of the ignorant masses deluded and exploited by the vulgar plutocracy. Faith in the exceptional individual replaced for them faith in the mass of mankind. Men of letters were becoming aware that increased literacy instead of enlightening the masses, encouraged books of the lowest standards. Even Michelet conceded that the masses had to pass through a long process of education. "Let us climb to the top of our ivory tower," wrote Burckhardt's contemporary Flaubert, "to the last step, the one nearest the sky. It is cold there, sometimes, isn't it? But what does that matter? You see the stars shine clear, and you do not hear the geese cackle any longer."²¹ Burckhardt, too, advised his students to climb the ivory tower and to look out upon the beauty of this wicked world. His aestheticism was fundamentally asocial and he feared that the rule of the people would make higher culture impossible. Small wonder, for in 1845 the Democrats proposed that the University of Basle be closed and that a trade school be established to serve more practical needs. "I do not want to produce a family in these infamous times," he confided to a friend in 1846, "no proletarian will teach my children morals."²²

He believed that the cultural crisis, a sign of the decadence of the modern world, began with the French Revolution. The great harm, as Burckhardt diagnosed the situation in 1871, was begun mainly by Rousseau, with his doctrine of the goodness of human nature. Out of this plebs and educated alike distilled the doctrine of the golden age that was to come infallibly, provided people were left alone. The result, as every child knows, Burckhardt complained, was the complete disintegration of the idea of authority in the heads of mortals, whereupon, of course, men periodically fall victim to sheer power. In the meanwhile, the idea of the natural goodness of man had turned among the intelligent strata of Europe, into the idea of progress, that is, undisturbed money making and modern comforts with philanthropy as a sop to conscience. "The only conceivable salvation," Burckhardt concluded, "would be for this insane optimism,

in great and small, to disappear from people's brains. But then our present-day Christianity is not equal to the task, it has gone in for and got mixed up with optimism for the last two hundred years. A change will and must come, but after God knows how much suffering."²³

One symptom of the cultural crisis which caused Burckhardt special concern sounds painfully familiar to the contemporary academician. In 1872 he confided to Arnold von Salis:

Things have reached the point at which first-class minds, which ten years ago devolved to scholarship, the Church or the Civil Service are moving over in appreciable numbers to the *business* party. And as to the extent to which the Universities are feeling the lack of *timber* when they have to stop a gap (that is to say of sufficiently respected young scholars who are neither deaf nor blind from special research), on that score I have heard quite incredible admissions from a well-informed source."²⁴

Burckhardt feared that in an aging Europe hope had been forfeit since 1789. He seems to have felt this sense of futility in himself, for he lacked, he said, the two qualities which would make the world tolerable, either ambition or Christian love. With a critical aside at the optimistic historians of his day, Burckhardt damned the mass culture of his century:

. . . Don't let yourself be imposed upon any longer by the Liberals in historical matters; at bottom they are still only jabbering away in the wake of the Encyclopaedists. 'But look ye, I am going to tell you something, the culture we have now etc.'—is not worth a fig, and the only result is that everyone is made on one last. It is a long story . . . the spread of culture and the decrease of originality and individuality, of will and of capacity, and the world will suffocate and decay one day in the very dung of its own philistinism. I have said it!²⁵

In the revolution of the 1830's and 1840's Burckhardt saw not new hope for individual freedom but only a continuation of the French Revolution and a mere preliminary to powerful upheavals yet to come. He learned from history that the despotism of the masses would make the enjoyment of higher culture impossible and would lead only to future tyranny.²⁶ The bourgeoisie would only contribute further to the banalization of culture. He saw the roots of war to come embedded deeply in the nature of the peoples, which are only human nature raised to a higher power.²⁷ Such was the future which Burckhardt with his "mania for prophesying" anticipated, though he was careful not to share his misgivings with his students. The late humanism, then, of this suffering Cassandra of the succumbing West was not the euphoric idealization and idolization of man which serves some intellectuals as a substitute for a realistic religious anthropology. He refused to allow positive evil to be dissolved into any Hegelian gnosticism or to be hidden behind the cushions of material well being and physical comfort.

Living in a generation of men and in times such as his, Burckhardt yielded to resignation. A lonely man with only a poor capacity for genuine friendships, he founded neither a family nor an academic dynasty. He rejected political activism and abandoned journalism as a disgusting *metier*. His response to the pressures and threats of the world around him was withdrawal and contemplation. He looked out upon life, past, present and future with what Matthew Arnold has called a "sad lucidity of soul." He turned to history, withdrew within himself, and escaped when he could to Italy. It was there that he found aristocratic

culture, beauty, history, and it was there that he found himself. To his friend, Schauenburg, a politically minded medic, he laid his soul bare:

You weather-wise fellows vie with each other in getting deeper and deeper into this wretched age—I on the other hand have secretly fallen out with it entirely, and for that reason am escaping from it to the beautiful, lazy south, where history is dead, and I, who am so tired of the present, will be refreshed by the thrill of antiquity as by some wonderful and peaceful tomb. Yes, I want to get away from them all, from the radicals, the communists, the industrialists, the intellectuals, the pretentious, the reasoners, the abstract, the absolute, the philosophers, the sophists, the State fanatics, the idealists, the 'ists' and 'isms' of every kind—I shall only meet the Jesuits on the other side, [i.e., in Italy] and among 'isms' only absolutism; and foreigners can usually avoid both.²⁸

The ascetic pattern of Burckhardt's life and thought was a natural corollary to his resignation. Nietzsche concluded that if Satan is the prince of this world then man must be Satanic. [Burckhardt adopted a contrary proposition, namely, that if the world is evil then man should not value it more highly than it deserves. The aesthetic view of history serves as a noble narcotic which makes the domination of evil in the world bearable. Such hope as remained for the survival of the creative spirit, spontaneity, and the revival of culture lay with dedicated ascetics, cultural anchorites. Only those men can change things, he held, who are independent of the enormously expensive life of the great cities, far from the atmosphere of company promoting and from the horrific luxury to which official literature and art are falling victim.²⁹ The ascetic aesthete's decisive criterion for judging everything in the social order is the question of its service to culture and the life of the spirit. In the *Weltgeschichtliche Betrachtungen* he defined culture as the sum total of those mental developments which take place spontaneously and lay no claim to universal or compulsive authority. The enjoyment of art, literature, and history as aesthetic phenomena helps man to overcome melancholy and to bear the burden of existence. Burckhardt saw the fundamental dichotomy as that of crass material power on one hand and spiritual aesthetic values on the other. Like Goethe, he believed that the conflict of culture and barbarism was the only one worth becoming involved in. Since culture as an actual experience and event can only be realized in the individual personality, its cure can proceed only in individual personalities. In a society dominated by the half educated, the deadly enemies of personality, the dedicated few must preserve culture through self-denial and a total commitment to the higher life.

The finest product of Burckhardt's own dedication was clearly his essay *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*. He removed himself to the total isolation of Zürich in order to complete it. It was, as he wrote the Freiburg historian Schreiber, a "child of sorrow" [*Schmerzenskind*].³⁰ Its appearance in its abbreviated form meant that the author had despaired of completing the transept of his life's work just as he had renounced the building of the nave. No sooner did the book appear than he felt that any number of passages should be rejected and rewritten. But fair-minded people, he hoped, would perhaps acknowledge that the book had to be written from sheer inner necessity.³¹ The final part of the volume, on morality and religion, reveals more clearly than the others, the intimate ties between Burckhardt's own late humanism and his interpretation of the Renaissance.

Burckhardt identified the Italian civilization of the Renaissance as the "mother of our own." He found the most conclusive proofs of consanguinity in their spiritual affinity, the final subject which he examines in his essay and in a sense the summary conclusion of the whole. Here the fundamental vice of the Italian character, which was at the same time a condition of its greatness, namely, excessive individualism is seen to work most corrosively. Unlike Nietzsche, Burckhardt neither revelled in the excesses nor concealed the dark side of the Renaissance. Suggestions of the decline in spirituality and the decay of basic human values appear throughout the early sections of the book. But the final part presents the melancholy and depressing picture of the advance of superstition, the lingering of astrology, a surfeit of promiscuity, prostitution, gambling, vengeance, paid crimes, few restraints, and the disintegration of beliefs. A subjective attitude toward religion was marked by tolerant skepticism, mocking, and occasionally outright rejection. Renaissance paganism, according to this formula, consisted of a mixture of classical superstition and modern freethinking, marked by the acceptance of amoral and even immoral attitudes in public and private life. In all this, as Burckhardt saw it, the Renaissance was the herald of the values of modernity.³²

A melange of ideas drawn from the sixth book will provide some useful illustration. Burckhardt with characteristic modesty and professional restraint carefully qualified his assumptions and generalizations, for, he conceded, the relation of the various peoples of the earth to the supreme interests of life, to God, virtue, and immortality can never be compared to one another with absolute strictness and certainty. To strike the right balance in assessing the morality of a people, he granted, is not given to human insight. What he offers is not a judgment, but rather a string of marginal notes which touch mostly on the life of the upper class, not the whole people. Burckhardt saw the humanists as substituting for holiness the cult of historical greatness.

Italy found itself in the midst of a great moral crisis out of which the best men saw hardly any escape. The sentiment of honor, that enigmatic mixture of conscience and egotism that often survives in modern man after he has lost faith, love, and hope, was then the strongest bulwark against evil. This sense of honor, which is compatible with much selfishness and great vices or may serve as a nucleus for the elements salvaged from the wreck of a noble character, has become a decisive test of conduct in the minds of cultivated Europeans. The Renaissance expressed the same faith in the goodness of human nature which inspired the men of the Enlightenment and prepared the way for the French Revolution. Egotism as the root of all evil was more highly developed in the Italians, who were for that reason more inclined to wickedness than the members of other nations of the time, but it spread also to them. Morality, which stands in the closest connection with the consciousness of God and faith in the divine governance of the world, suffered due to conditions within the church. The Renaissance men were altogether subjective and markedly worldly. With the bold speculations on freedom and necessity, belief in God began to waver and fatalism to gain. The need of salvation came to be felt more and more dimly, although much genuine religion could still survive. Much humanism became in fact paganism as a resuscitated antiquity shouldered religion aside. Doubt and un-

belief led to a general skepticism and the dissolution of the most essential Christian dogmas. The form assumed by the strong religious instinct which, notwithstanding all, survived in many natures, was Theism or Deism. The theistic mode of thought of the Florentine academy and of Lorenzo was one of the most precious fruits of the knowledge of the world and of man which have come to maturity.

Burckhardt's rediscovery of the Renaissance world and man clearly reflected his objective view of the nineteenth century world and his subjective view of self. Burckhardt's own late humanism extensively conditioned his understanding of the earlier Renaissance human and humanism. He found the ills and evils of modern society well advanced in the *Quattrocento*, a grave moral crisis, honor as the final bulwark against wickedness, false optimism and faith in the goodness of man, egotism, inauspicious ecclesiastical conditions, subjectiveness, worldliness, unbelief, loss of faith, and fatalism. He traced the roots of his personal *Weltanschauung* imbedded in that same Italian soil, which prematurely nourished skepticism, pessimism, and resignation in a generation of aristocratic intellectuals. These characteristics seemed to him to be neither good nor bad, but necessary.

Burckhardt, who believed himself to be living in a time of great transition, was attracted not only to the epoch which saw the Middle Ages become modern, but to that which saw antiquity turn medieval.³³ With Spengler the reading public once again became interested in Burckhardt's *The Age of Constantine*, first published in 1853. Certainly, as Moses Hadas has remarked, no epoch of remote history can be so relevant to modern interests as that period of transition, for contemporary developments have made the analogy inescapable.³⁴ One can detect in Burckhardt's description of that age of deadly crisis and the crumbling of culture the breadth of Burckhardt's own pessimism and resignation. The undercurrents of Burckhardt's thoughts on the fundamental changes in both transitions, the ages of Constantine and of the Renaissance, run strangely parallel and true to his own basic outlook.

Nietzsche, who heard Burckhardt deliver some of his *Reflections on History*, paid him the supreme compliment of announcing that for the first time in his life he had enjoyed a lecture. He went on to confide that he was perhaps the only one of the sixty hearers who understood Burckhardt's profound train of thought. In the *Reflections*, delivered as lectures between 1868 and 1885, Burckhardt offered his mature generalizations on the role of morality and religion in the making of history, shedding some light on his working hypotheses when doing the *Renaissance*. A selection of instances may prove useful. He defined religion as the expression of human nature's eternal and indestructible metaphysical need. Religions represent the whole supersensual complement of man, everything he cannot give himself. At the same time, they are the reflections of whole peoples and epochs of civilization in a great "other," or the impress and contour which those peoples and epochs project upon eternity. Although that impress and contour regards itself as stable and durable, it is subject to change.³⁵ There is a wide variation in the relationship of religion and morality.³⁶ The masses by mimesis follow a founder because they cannot resist and cling tenaciously to the external form (for the heart of any religion is a sealed book to them) until they are subjected by some stronger power.³⁷ In decline, the appearance of

heresy is a sign that the religion no longer quite fulfills the metaphysical need from which it sprang.³⁸ Burckhardt resorts to a sociology of religion in assessing the hold of religion on different segments of its adherents. The nascent, traditional, and retrospective stages may exist simultaneously on all three planes according to the variations of social stratification and cultural influences. A great uncertainty always vitiates the historian's judgment.³⁹ Yet a powerful religion permeates all the affairs of life and every element of culture. Religion is the main bond of human society as the sole guardian of that state of morality which holds society together.⁴⁰ In the period from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries religion entered into the closest association with the popular culture of the epoch, allying itself with the whole of human life.⁴¹ It was the culture of the masses.

These observations of Burckhardt form a mirror image of his own late humanism. The reflections to a large extent represent abstractions done on the real life models of the *Age of Constantine* and *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*. The points are inescapably obvious, such as the uncertainty of the historian, religion as an expression of metaphysical need, the reflection of a civilization, religion's changeable nature, the moral gap, the low estate of the masses, vast religio-social differences. Yet in these later lectures there is a new emphasis on the positive role of religion in culture and as the main bond of society, which indicates that Burckhardt himself may have come to see the inadequacy in this respect of his earlier historical analysis. That this is indeed the case the great historian confessed with characteristic humility in a letter of 1889 to Ludwig von Pastor, an admission which merits direct quotation, for it eliminates by confession the triumph of any prosecuting revisionist.

... It has always pained me to hear sincere Catholics adopt an inimical tone, and when they failed to see that, within the artistic and literary Renaissance in Italy, one great, strong current served to promote respect for religion and the glorification of the holy, wherever the other currents may have run. I can still remember quite distinctly the impression this phenomenon made on me in the course of my work, and only deplore that I did not pursue the point more vigorously; but thirty years ago one was very much alone with such thoughts, and the crowd of impressions of all that was new to me was so great that it was impossible to preserve one's sense of proportion in everything. And yet how little I knew compared with the vast extent which these studies have since attained, principally through your work.⁴²

Burckhardt's high regard for the Middle Ages and anti-modernism prompted Alfred von Martin's thesis of the close affinity of Burckhardt's humanism to Catholicism.⁴³ Burckhardt considered it a grotesque error to play the Renaissance off against the Middle Ages and in later years he scoffed at those moderns who thought of medieval man as impatiently awaiting deliverance from his dark and unfortunate circumstances. In fact, Burckhardt planned to do a series of cultural-historical descriptions of the Middle Ages connecting his works on the age of Constantine and on the Renaissance.⁴⁴ In his lectures of 1849-50 *Vorlesung über die Blütezeit des Mittelalters* he showed enthusiasm for the Middle Ages and defended the crusades against the saucy jibes of Voltaire. Burckhardt was sympathetic to asceticism and celibacy, to those spiritual athletes, the monks, to the denial of the world and to at least aesthetic contemplation. Religion had great objective value for him and Christianity marked the highest ethical peak.

On the other hand, von Martin argues, Burckhardt's anti-modernism begins with the Renaissance and Reformation. The former contributed to the Enlightenment's false image of man, for Erasmus with his moralism was a "terrible simplifier" anticipating Renan's "*christianisme simple*." The Reformation brought to the anarchic masses a subjective emancipating theology which extended Luther's fine ethic to people incapable of responding to it. Burckhardt denied the world and affirmed culture, von Martin asserts, whereas Protestantism affirmed the world and denied culture. The Counter-Reformation was acceptable to Burckhardt, for it represented a conservative reaction to revolutionary action. The Baroque and Rococo were still aristocratic and therefore made possible a "personal" culture. Burckhardt's favorite painter was, after all, the aristocratic, mature, classical, Catholic Rubens, not the stormy, lawless, Protestant Rembrandt.⁴⁵ The eighteenth century philosophers, the grave diggers of the *ancien régime*, with their theories of the natural goodness of man and belief in progress, precipitated revolution and prepared the way for the ridiculous optimism of nineteenth century Protestantism. The age of the masses introduced by the anti-religious French Revolution is moving always further from classical antiquity and Christianity, the two pillars of western culture which, conversely, must lead the guardians of that culture to shore up these pillars all the more energetically.

Von Martin's thesis is intriguing and not without a great deal of truth. Yet it was in his great essay on the Renaissance that Burckhardt contrasted the flood of new thoughts, purposes, and views to the medieval conception of nature and man. "The Middle Ages," he wrote, "can have no right to impose upon us their dogmatical verdict in a matter of such vast importance." He never abandoned this position. On yet a deeper level Burckhardt's problem remains for modern man, for Burckhardt's *Heilsgeschichte* of true culture offers only a very tenuous hope and comfort against the *Leidensgeschichte* of unfaith, evil, and emptiness. Von Martin's attempt to associate this *Heilsgeschichte* with an ancient and honorable medieval tradition is noteworthy and admirable, but the two world views, in spite of formal peripheral coincidences, were anything but concentric. Nor did Burckhardt believe that the modern dilemma could be solved by a simple pathetic return to a medieval mold. There, he felt, one merely finds dependence *satis superque*. On the contrary, the psychological motifs which Rudolf Stadelmann, the late Tübingen historian, identified as most representative of the spiritual climate during the *waning* Middle Ages were precisely the basic elements of Burckhardt's late humanism, skepticism, pessimism, and resignation.⁴⁶ Of the various figures of that day, Sebastian Franck best summed up the misgivings of the age, like Burckhardt doubting the intrinsic value of his own epoch. And yet there was a fourth motif in the intellectual life of Jacob Burckhardt, emancipation, not in the fifteenth century sense of a new rationalism, with which Burckhardt was already surfeited, but in terms of the one remaining source of hope, religion. In the final analysis, Burckhardt was convinced, no liberal education would be able to save man from a great violation of the human soul, but only religion. He believed that without a transcendent urge which outweighs all the clamor for power and money, nothing will be of any use,⁴⁷ words reminiscent of Karl Jasper's "*Ohne Transzendenz ist Existenz unfruchtbarer und liebelloser Trotz*." Burckhardt's late humanism, then, was far from the autarchic self-assured

optimistic humanism which sees man as his own legislator working out his purposes as he frames his provisional laws. He was sufficiently perceptive to see that to recognize man's autonomy as ultimate and determinative and then to concede the absolute relativism of everything is precisely to undermine the central position of man, the penalty of secularism and its view of the world. He had little hope for a genuine religious revival, because the modern spirit of unrestricted worldliness is overtly hostile to any form of spiritual practice and to religious values. Burckhardt saw "modern Christianity" as a contradiction in terms, because the evil genius of modern life, the struggle for power and wealth, is opposed to selfless love and service. This simple, but basic insight, as Karl Löwith has observed, is the more remarkable because it is that of a secular historian of the nineteenth century and not of a neo-orthodox theologian of the twentieth.⁴⁸

Actually Burckhardt had much in common with his contemporary Søren Kierkegaard to whom neo-orthodoxy is heavily indebted. They both contrasted man's real existence to the false utilitarian spirit of their time. Both criticized the false optimism rampant, especially the Hegelian variety. They saw the church everywhere compromising with the world. They shared the insight that a de-Christianized history has also been dehumanized. Burckhardt in criticizing Renaissance and Enlightenment moralists saw what Kierkegaard also reported in *Fear and Trembling* that not to go beyond morals is not to go far enough. Kierkegaard knew that free responsible action is only possible if the world itself is not closed. It is only because man in faith is freed from the world that he is free for the world. Because faith breaks the domination of the world, it gives domination over the world and responsibility for the world. Burckhardt lacked that faith and was too honest to pretend to have it. But he reached out his hand for that emancipation and from time to time seemed almost to touch it, if not to grasp it.

With a certain shyness and defensiveness Burckhardt publicly backed away from any religious assertion that could come too near the inner recesses of his spirit. Thus in his *Weltgeschichtliche Betrachtungen* he commented demurely: "the amelioration offered by religion is here beyond our scope."⁴⁹ In *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* he ventured the statement: "How soon and by what paths this search will lead us back to God, and in what ways the religious temper of the individual will be affected by it, are questions which cannot be met by any general answer." Privately Burckhardt repeatedly gave indications that he lived in hope, enjoying a general belief in Providence and asserting that "if happiness is to be found in the midst of our misfortunes, it can only be a spiritual one."⁵⁰ A man's way of picturing a personal God grows, Burckhardt once explained, and is found according to his grief and suffering, and in this way all the rest—the Bible and doctrine—acquire a new hold on him.⁵¹

Though chronology makes it more idle than vital, the question rather naturally suggests itself as to whether that great Basle professor of our day might not have effected Burckhardt's true emancipation. Karl Barth could clearly have helped him surmount his difficulties with skeptical theology by pointing out that proper theology begins just at the point where the difficulties disclosed by Strauss and De Wette are seen and measured for size. His Biblical realism would have brought man into proper focus, destroyed the illusions of goodness, optimism, and progress, and revealed man as a creature estranged from his own reality. Finally,

Barth's message of God's humanism, the only truly *neo*-humanism beyond late humanism, might have opened up for Burckhardt a hope which transcends pessimism and an ethic of activism which overcomes resignation.⁵² But, then, as Burckhardt once said of Luther, who are we to make him conform to our programs?

A hundred years have passed since Burckhardt's greatest book went to press, that is, as he put it, was "irrevocably babbled out."⁵³ This is the twentieth century to which Burckhardt often addressed himself, a century which has certainly lived up to his lowest expectations. His problems are still our problems. We may well echo his sentiment: "We do not so much wish through experience to become smart for one occasion as to become wise for always."⁵⁴ Burckhardt would doubtless agree that such *sapientia* must be something much more than that worldly, practical *prudentia* which was a continuously growing element in the civilization of the Renaissance until it became a Machiavellian immoralism and was stopped only by a sufficiently strong reaction.

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1. Letter to Edward Schauenburg, Basle, 5 December 1869, Alexander Dru, ed., *The Letters of Jacob Burckhardt* (New York, 1955), p. 132.

2. Herbert Butterfield, *Man on His Past* (Cambridge, 1955), pp. 21 f.

3. Letter to Johannes Riggenbach, Basle, 28 August 1838, Dru, ed., *Letters*, p. 37.

4. Letter to Willibald Beyschlag, Berlin, 14 June 1842, Dru, ed., *Letters*, p. 73.

5. Letter to Nietzsche, Basle, 26 September 1886, Dru, ed., *Letters*, p. 212.

6. Lord Acton, "The Borgias and their latest Historian," *Historical Essays and Studies*, pp. 65-66.

7. C. V. Wedgwood, *Velvet Studies* (London, 1949), pp. 12 f.

8. On January 5, 1862, Burckhardt wrote to Otto Mündler: "The position in regard to my book is not, unfortunately, what friend Lübke supposes it to be. The melancholy truth is that we have not sold two hundred copies. That kind of thing is no longer bought in Germany," Dru, ed., *Letters*, p. 127. The second edition did not appear until 1869, the next in 1877, then, 1885, 1896, 1897, 1899, 1901, 1904, 1908, 1913, 1919, etc., J. Huizinga, *Parerga* (2nd ed., Amsterdam, 1945), p. 103. Although the first English translation was not done until 1878, the work early attracted the attention also of discriminating English readers such as J. A. Symonds, whose *Renaissance in Italy* began to appear in 1875.

9. Dru, ed., *Letters*, Intro., pp. 4 f.

10. Letter to Johannes Riggenbach, Basle, 28 August 1838, Dru, ed., *Letters*, pp. 35 ff.; intro., p. 6. He reaffirmed his faith in Providence and the "sum of Christ's teaching" in a letter to his sister Louise Burckhardt, Berlin, Thursday, 16 July 1840, Dru, ed., *Letters*, p. 55. Cf. also his Letter to von Preen, Basle, 7 July 1878, *ibid.*, p. 177, for his continued distaste for liberal theology.

11. *Ibid.*, pp. 7 f. Karl Barth, *Protestant Thought: From Rousseau to Ritschl* (New York, 1959), pp. 362 ff., 389, takes careful measure of Strauss as a symptom of theology's ills of that time.

12. Letter to Gottfried Kinkel, Basle, 28 June 1845, Dru, ed., *Letters*, p. 95. Very revealing for Burckhardt's attitude toward the church is his Letter to Willibald Beyschlag, Basle, 14 January 1844, Dru, ed., *Letters*, p. 87 f.

13. Letter to Ischudi, Berlin, 1 December 1839, Dru, ed., *Letters*, pp. 48 f.

14. *Reflections on History* (London, 1944), pp. 20, 132.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 17. Cf. H. R. Trevor-Roper, "The Faustian Historian: Jacob Burckhardt," *Men and Events* (New York, 1957), p. 277: "Where then is the real evidence of human history to be found? Burckhardt answered that if man is the agent, not the mere dead matter of history, then his historical character must be revealed in his work, not in the neuter systems of which he is said to be the victim."

16. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

17. Dru, ed., *Letters*, p. 23. Kurt Breysig, *Die Geschichte der Menschheit*, V (Berlin, 1955), p. 269, believes that in his lectures on Greek culture Burckhardt's interpretation was too Schopenhauerian.

18. Letter to von Preen, Basle, 12 October 1871, Dru, ed., *Letters*, p. 148.

19. *Brief an Gottfried Kinkel vom 14. September 1844*, cited in Valentin Gittermann, *Jacob Burckhardt als politischer Denker* (Wiesbaden, 1957), pp. 14, n. 23; 15.

20. *Gesammelte Werke*, V (Basle, 1956), pp. 365, 370. On *Der griechische Pessimismus*, cf. pp. 349-367.

21. Emery Nefl, *The Poetry of History* (New York, 1947), p. 151.
22. V. Gitermann, *op. cit.*, pp. 18, 24. Burckhardt feared the influence of the masses on religion, as well as on education. Cf. Letter to Friedrich Solomon Vögelin, Basle, 15 February 1863, Dru, ed., *Letters*, p. 129.
23. Letter to von Preen, Basle, 2 July 1871, Dru, ed., *Letters*, p. 147. In his *Reflections on History*, p. 114, Burckhardt remarks that Rousseau's *Contrat Social* was perhaps a greater "event" than the Seven Years' War.
24. Letter to Arnold von Salis, Basle, 21 April 1872, Dru, ed., *Letters*, pp. 150 f.
25. Letter to H. Schauenburg, Berlin, 22 March 1847, Dru, ed., *Letters*, pp. 105 f.
26. Letter to Gottfried Kinkel, Basle, 18 April 1845, Dru, ed., *Letters*, pp. 93 f.
27. Letter to von Preen, Basle, 20 July 1870, Dru, ed., *Letters*, p. 142.
28. Letter to H. Schauenburg, Basle, 28 February 1846, Dru, ed., *Letters*, p. 96.
29. Letter to von Preen, Basle, New Year's Eve, 1872, Dru, ed., *Letters*, p. 157.
30. Jacob Burckhardt, *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien*, Werner Kaegi, ed. (Berlin and Leipzig, 1930), intro., p. LI.
31. Letter to Paul Heyse, Basle, 16 November 1860, Dru, ed., *Letters*, pp. 126 f.
32. Cf. Denys Hay, "Burckhardt's 'Renaissance': 1860-1960," *History Today*, X, 1 (January 1960), p. 15. Cf. also Johan Huizinga, "Das Problem der Renaissance," *Parerga* (Amsterdam, 1945), p. 106. Burckhardt's thesis of the earlier development of individualism in Italy is basic also to his interpretation of art and architecture, *Die Baukunst der Renaissance in Italien, Gesammelte Werke*, II (Basle, 1955), p. 3.
33. Letter to Arnold von Salis, Basle, 21 April 1872, Dru, ed., *Letters*, p. 150: "What you say about this being a transitional period is felt by all thinking people about everything."
34. Jacob Burckhardt, *The Age of Constantine the Great* (London, 1949), Moses Hadas, trans. and ed. intro., p. 7.
35. *Reflections on History*, p. 41.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 42.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 44.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 51.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 50.
40. *Ibid.*, pp. 86, 93.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 124.
42. Letter to Ludwig von Pastor, Basle, 12 May 1889, Dru, ed., *Letters*, p. 216.
43. Alfred von Martin, *Die Religion Jacob Burckhardts. Eine Studie zum Thema Humanismus und Christentum* (Munich, 1947).
44. Letter to von Preen, Basle, 31 May 1874, Dru, ed., *Letters*, p. 160.
45. Cf. Emil Maurer, *Jacob Burckhardt und Rubens* (Basle, 1951), p. 290: "Es geht ihm, auch mit Rubens, nicht um eine hermetische Kunstgeschichte, nicht um 'ästhetische' Fragen, sondern um Lebensfragen, um das nämlich, was dem Schönlebendigen an Lebenswärt innewohnt."
46. *Vom Geist des Ausgehenden Mittelalters* (Halle/Saale, 1929).
47. Karl Löwith, *Meaning in History* (Chicago, 1949), p. 28.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 32.
49. *Reflections on History*, p. 20.
50. Dru, ed., *Letters*, pp. 33 f.
51. Letter to Friedrich Solomon Vögelin, Basle, 15 February 1863, Dru, ed., *Letters*, p. 129. Cf. Alfred von Martin, *op. cit.*, p. 52.
52. Cf. Karl Barth, "The Christian Message and the New Humanism," *Against the Stream* (New York, 1954), pp. 184 ff.
53. Letter to Heinrich Schreiber, Basle, 1 August 1860, Dru, ed., *Letters*, p. 125.
54. Cited in Johannes Thyssen, *Geschichte der Geschichtsphilosophie* (Bonn 1954), p. 120.



BURCKHARDT AND ITALY: THE "INNER NECESSITY"

The earliest significant reference to Italy in the published correspondence of Jacob Burckhardt occurs in a letter of January, 1838, a few months before his twentieth birthday. He has been telling his older friend, the historian Heinrich Schreiber, about his circle of friends and his happiness. "But, since man is happiest at just the time when he is not completely happy, so there are not lacking with me also many hours in which unsatisfied longing plunges me into a kind of blissful unhappiness. My feelings, already too keenly developed, can't escape it, and often I allow myself the dangerous pleasure of taking refuge in an ideal world. . . . A mighty longing has seized all of us to see Italy."¹ The letter encloses Burckhardt's "Elegy," a poem written in the previous year expressing this yearning for Italy, which he had earlier visited for a few days.²

In a letter to another friend, written a few months later when he was planning to go to Italy, he expresses the fear that, if the trip fails to come off, he will fall into discouragement and apathy, a kind of spiritual bankruptcy. "For I have staked a good deal on it."³ "I *must* go this time, even if it were in the devil's claws."⁴

The trip did take place, and affected him deeply. Several poems written about this time attest to the enchantment which Italy held for him.⁵ His letters, too, are filled with it. Italy has overwhelmed and intoxicated him. "The view from Brunelleschi's dome placed the crown on everything. This is the most beautiful thing I have seen in my life."⁶ He will always feel for this new heaven and new earth *ein ewiges Heimweh*—an everlasting homesickness.⁷ The enjoyment of Italy, he says in a later letter, is "the highest of all concrete enjoyments."⁸

But Italy brought not only pleasure. On a heavenly evening in Pisa, and three days later while looking at the sunset from the cathedral dome in Florence, he was overcome by a homesickness for vanished friendship which brought a pain he hopes never to feel again. Like Faust, he is filled with overflowing longing.⁹

The romanticism of young Burckhardt was far more than a pose; his was a deeply emotional nature. During his student days in Germany from 1839 to 1843, his letters express a fervent attachment to his new country. "I often want to fall to my knees before this holy German earth and thank God that I speak the German language! I owe Germany *everything!* . . . from this soil I shall always draw my best strength—and now this people, this splendid German youth, and this land, this garden of God!—Am I worthy to set foot on this soil soaked with the blood of martyrs? Through what sacrifice will I pay even a little of this great debt that I owe Germany?"¹⁰ The cathedral of Cologne made an overwhelming impression on him: ". . . this church is no building like all the others in the world, but the inexplicable revelation of a heavenly great genius without equal."¹¹ On one visit there he wept like a child.¹² "I want to devote my life to showing the Swiss that they are German."¹³ If it were not for his father and sister, he would rather stay in Germany than return home to Basel.¹⁴

His friendships in these years were passionate and sometimes painful. As a twenty-one year old, he defends himself against the charge of being a misanthrope, but admits that it is a dangerous thing, in his eyes, to form a really close relationship; one can't be too careful. He pictures himself as hungry for love, and longing for a kind word.¹⁵ If he seems reserved, he declares, it is because he

has knocked on every door, seeking friendship, but has found no response.^{15a} When he wrote these things, he was still in Basel; he had not left for Germany. Even in these early years he was making irreparable breaks with close friends, a habit of which we shall see further examples. Possibly his difficulties in personal relations helped to create the mood of melancholy and resignation that appears so early and remains so constant a factor in his personality.

Burckhardt himself, in his youth, used such words as "fiery" and "passionate" to describe his relationship with his friends. To one of them he wrote: "That you will come to mean a great deal to me I know; whether you will become everything to me depends on you." And in the same letter: "I am horrified sometimes at the violence with which I grasp everything."¹⁶ Many of his letters indeed deserve to be described as violent in their professions of love and affection. They are sometimes almost embarrassing in their intensity.

In Basel he had felt isolated. In Germany he found a group of congenial friends, among them Gottfried Kinkel and the brothers Hermann and Eduard Schauenburg. When he left Germany to return to Basel, by way of a trip to Paris, he wrote of his longing to be with them again in Germany, and of his loneliness away from them. "For me," he writes from Paris at the ripe age of twenty-five, "the good times are now past."¹⁷ When he returned to Basel in 1843, he was bored and lonely; he felt that the city would always be intolerable to him. Germany, he wrote, had spoiled him by offering him the company of the best, but he had his memories to console him. In Basel he held himself aloof and was very cautious in his relationships.¹⁸

This mood persists for quite a while in his letters to his German friends. Basel is full of Philistines, good-hearted, boring people. His days in Germany were the golden days, and nothing like them will ever return. To his German friends he owes an unforgettable debt.¹⁹ Seldom, he believed, had a man of his age had such a strong sense of the insignificant and fleeting character of human things, insofar as they related merely to the individual.²⁰

In 1844 Burckhardt began to edit the *Basler Zeitung*, a conservative journal. He wrote Kinkel that his aims in doing so were to combat both the sympathy for absolutism felt by some of his fellow-citizens and the radicalism which he found equally disgusting.²¹ His political views were already clearly defined. Like many of his attitudes, his political position may be largely described as an opposition to his own age. The forces of popular government which had been gathering strength since the French Revolution seemed to him to portend nothing but evil, and he had a deep distaste for mass rule. In time he came to foresee, rising out of popular government, terrible tyrannies, the increasing militarization of life, and cultural impoverishment.²²

At the same time that he was editing the paper, he was giving public lectures, enjoying popular esteem, and making a comfortable salary. In spite of all this, he still insisted on feeling lonely and isolated. He became so tired of Basel and of Swiss politics that in 1846 he quit the paper and went to Italy. His trip was cut short by an unexpected offer of work in Berlin, where he was to assist his old teacher of art history, Franz Kugler, in preparing revised editions of two of the latter's books. There seemed to be a possibility of a permanent appointment there, but this did not work out. In Berlin he lived a hard-working, withdrawn

life, associating only with the members of Kugler's family and immediate circle, longing for Italy, and expressing his distaste for Berlin. There was nothing new in his aversion to Berlin, but there was a definite change in his feeling for Germany as a whole. The old emotional attachment was gone; though he was back in the land of his dearest memories, he was not happy there. He did not see his German friends, for whom he had so recently expressed such longing. He was even putting out feelers for a job in Basel, at a time when a permanent position in Berlin still seemed possible. He wrote that he would rather live in Basel for 1200 francs a year than in Berlin for twice as much.²³ He felt that Germany had changed; he too was changing.

He was, in fact, approaching a turning-point in his life—his inner life. A clear indication of this is given in a letter to Hermann Schauenburg, a few months before Burckhardt's thirtieth birthday. He urges Hermann to marry; his own life, he finds, is sadder and emptier than he would have believed. But he finds consolation in his freedom; one who lives alone does not so easily fall into the clutches of this miserable world. "Hermann, I am becoming gradually bolder and more defiant, and you will finally witness the spectacle of one who was born more fearful than all of you playing quite insolently with life."²⁴

In 1848 he was back in Basel, teaching and lecturing. During the months preceding and following his return, he was drawing even farther away from his German friends. His letters show this most clearly in the case of Kinkel and of Hermann Schauenburg.

Gottfried Kinkel had been one of Burckhardt's closest friends and confidants, and Burckhardt had often written him in terms of deep affection and loyalty. But Kinkel had a genius for getting himself into trouble and then committing further indiscretions which seriously embarrassed the efforts of his friends to get him out of it. He had been turning more and more into a revolutionary and had published some of Burckhardt's poems against Burckhardt's will. Yet in 1846 Burckhardt had written to him: "... no difference of views is going to separate me from you. . . . Politics are dead for me; what I do, I do as a man, and as a man I love you, even if you commit stupidities ten times worse."²⁵

Burckhardt wrote him several letters in 1847, the last one on August 23; then his letters cease. In the revolutionary movements of 1848-9, Kinkel took an active part, until he was wounded, captured, and sentenced to life imprisonment by the Prussian government. Burckhardt now wrote of his fallen friend without compassion, in fact with a kind of impatience and disgust. To a fund which was being raised in an effort to procure Kinkel's release, he sent a contribution, but the old friendship was gone.²⁶ In later years, the two sometimes met, and they carried on a desultory correspondence, with more warmth on Kinkel's side than on Burckhardt's.²⁷

Hermann Schauenburg, like Kinkel, had been entrusted with some of Burckhardt's most intimate thoughts. Since their first meeting, in 1841, both had realized the great differences in their political views; Burckhardt was already a pronounced conservative, Schauenburg a fighter for freedom.²⁸ This had not prevented an instantaneous friendship from springing up between them. Schauenburg had been briefly imprisoned for his views in 1843, and in 1848 he became deeply involved in revolutionary activity. On August 23, 1848, Burckhardt wrote

to him; he mentioned his own loneliness, which he said was greater than ever, and commented on Hermann's political activity. While his friend has concerned himself with that which has fallen into ruin and confusion, Burckhardt's desire is to see and seek the harmonious. He has entered the cool divine grove, and plans to remain in it and give his devotion to it.

In Germany today, he continues, private life is disorganized, and everything has broken its bounds and gone off the track. He discusses the gloomy prospects of his German friends, and at the end he takes leave of Hermann. He asks him not to be angry because he himself is taking another road. Hermann will always be one of the heroes of his youth, glorified in his heart. While Hermann has talked of going to America, Burckhardt will make another pilgrimage over the Alps to the south. He sees a light gleaming from afar which will never go out. "In the dark glow of approaching twilight, let us take leave. Farewell!"²⁹

A few letters to Hermann and his brother Eduard remain from 1849, written with great affection, but there the extant correspondence virtually ends. A fragment of a letter to Eduard exists from 1869, and another letter to him from 1881; there were other letters which are now lost. But here too, the old relationship was gone; in the case of Eduard, there had been no revolutionary activity to account for a change.³⁰ There are other German friends who cease at about this time to figure among Burckhardt's correspondents.

For the next decade, his letters are relatively scarce. In those that do exist, there is a noticeable change of tone. The old emotional note is gone; instead there begins to appear the Burckhardt of later years—still lonely, but more resigned, detached, ironical, objective. It is almost as if he had taken leave, not so much of his old friends and their interests as of his own younger self and earlier years.

The transition was not complete; in the late '40's Burckhardt suffered an emotional crisis. It was an unhappy love-affair, and we must turn for our knowledge of it to his poems, always the most direct witness to his feelings. Though apparently his last sad experience with love, it was not his first. Many years earlier, he had been in love with Maria Oser, a cousin. In 1840, in Berlin, he learned from his sister Louise of the girl's engagement. His letter to Louise shows that the news was a severe blow to him. "There will be many a sad hour, for renunciation is more bitter in proportion as the lost good is greater." But among his sighs and tears, he realizes that she is going to marry someone who—the italics are his—"will make Maria happier than I, passionate man, could ever have done."³¹

After his return to Basel in 1843, there are references in his letters to two beautiful blue eyes, to whom—or to which—he wrote a poem in 1844.³² Early in 1846 he wrote about an English girl, beautiful as an angel and cold as marble, who had never fooled him. He was more interested, he said, in another one, glowing and black-eyed. He gathered that he had made an impression here and there, which was a balm to his poor heart that had been scorned so often.³³ In the same year, however, he wrote: "I do not want to deliver a family into the clutches of this infamous time; no proletarian is going to teach my children manners. You don't know how determined I am in these things."³⁴ In Berlin in 1847, he wrote that, in spite of a young and lovely girl whom he saw often in Kugler's home, he was falling in love no more.³⁵

Yet in 1818 he was in love, apparently with the glowing dark-eyed girl he had referred to in 1846. She has been identified as Margaretha Stehlin, a member of a prominent Basel family.³⁶ Burckhardt seems to have been in love with her as early as the spring of 1848. In June, 1849, she married another man. Burckhardt wrote a number of poems about his love for her, including a little volume in dialect which he published anonymously in 1853.³⁷ His love poems sound the notes of tenderness, longing, despair, and, eventually, resignation and the acceptance of the duty to love man and the world, and to be ready for joy and sorrow alike. He must have been thinking of his unhappy love when he wrote to congratulate Eduard Schauenburg on his marriage at the end of 1849. He himself, he says, has always gotten things with little effort, so that now he feels that he is not brave enough or worthy enough to reach out his hand towards the highest goods of life.³⁸

After 1850 he wrote much less poetry. In 1882 he wrote a poem about one of Paul Heyse's plays, and Heyse claimed it as a triumph of the play that it had awakened the golden strings that had been silent so long.³⁹

Burckhardt's destiny lay in Basel. In 1858 he returned there from Zurich, where he had taught since 1855, to accept the professorship of history in the university. He eventually became professor of art history as well, taught for many years in the high school, and gave frequent public lectures. He had many chances to leave Basel for positions elsewhere; the invitation to succeed Ranke at Berlin is only the best known. He refused them all. He would not even consent to lecture outside of Basel, because he felt he owed the city all his strength and effort.⁴⁰

An occasional letter still has a deeply personal note. In 1860 he wrote to Paul Heyse that he remembered himself as he had been in 1847, egotistical and hard to bear. "But retaliation hasn't failed to come, and I have now gotten to the point where at every friendly encounter my heart is gratefully inclined."⁴¹ Another touch of the earlier Burckhardt is seen in his estrangement over many years from Heyse, merely because Burckhardt thought that there was someone—nobody knows who—speaking ill of him to Heyse and, presumably, turning the latter against him. This fear was unfounded, and the relationship was later resumed.⁴²

By 1858, then, at the age of forty—about halfway through his life, as it turned out—Burckhardt's outlook and activities had assumed the pattern they never lost. The youthful romantic, the man of feeling, has given way to the ironical observer and commentator on human affairs. This has been called the transition from the romantic to the classical Burckhardt.⁴³ The change was not absolute, of course. Otto Markwart, who knew him in his last years, regarded him as incurably romantic and speaks of his passionate nature.⁴⁴ Yet there was a change. The old friends, the old love for Germany, have receded. Basel, once intolerable to him, has become the inevitable and indispensable focus of his life. He never married, and indeed shunned any close attachments which might threaten his freedom.⁴⁵ But one love remained, and to it he was always constant: his love for Italy.

What part does Italy play in the intellectual and emotional life of Jacob Burckhardt? His approach to life and history was primarily aesthetic. To Emanuel Geibel he wrote in 1849 that he was moving in a direction contrary

to that of his time; the more madly the world rages, the more burning is his longing for the beautiful which is not of this world.⁴⁶ In his early years he aspired to a career as a poet. One of his reasons for abandoning poetry in favor of history was that he came to find the highest poetry in history; "history remains for me poetry in the highest measure."⁴⁷ He always disclaimed any right to be called a philosopher or systematic thinker; he was an *Anschauer*, a beholder. "I stick by nature to material things, to visible nature and history."⁴⁸ He wrote to Nietzsche in 1879 that he had never been a real thinker, but had delighted in that which can be seen as a picture (*das Bildliche*).⁴⁹

After he had abandoned the study of theology and all connection with conventional religion, he still regarded the human Jesus as the *most beautiful* manifestation in world history.⁵⁰ His revulsion against his own age was based in large part on its ugliness. He disliked not only radicals and radicalism, but railroads, coal, America, Wagner, and modern art.⁵¹ He wrote to Hermann Schauenburg in 1847 that in all the history of the world there was no period so unattractive as that since 1830. "I feel in myself the right to turn to that in which my soul finds nourishment." He quotes Geibel: "It is not that which is up-to-date that is beautiful, but the beautiful is always up-to-date."⁵² In 1846, when he was giving up the editorship of the *Basler Zeitung* and planning to go to Italy, he wrote that he was at odds with his time and was fleeing from it to the beautiful lazy south which was dead to history and would soothe the weariness that modernity produced in him. Beyond the mountains he would form new links with life and poetry, if anything was going to become of him.⁵³

Italy was the home of the ideal beauty for which he longed; it was the source of happiness and creative power.⁵⁴ On his first trip to Rome, in 1846, he was often, without special reason, overcome by the feeling that he was perfectly happy, with a sudden, inner joy. He felt a harmony of all his powers such as he had never experienced except for a few days in Bonn.⁵⁵ In 1852, as he was about to leave once more for Italy, he wrote to Schreiber that his poor soul demanded from time to time a refreshing bath in the realm of beautiful forms, especially those of landscape.⁵⁶ Vivid expression of his love for the south is given also in some of his poems.⁵⁷

Italy, he says in his letters, had given him a new standard of measurement for earthly things, and this was particularly true of Rome; for it was Rome that he loved most of all.⁵⁸ She was queen of the world, and gave an impression that no other city could equal.⁵⁹ In 1846 he was sure that he could never be altogether happy anywhere else.⁶⁰ As late as 1881, when he was over sixty, he was looking forward to a trip to Rome, where he would find a new heaven and new earth; he had used the same expression about Italy over forty years earlier.⁶¹ In 1883, Rome—the old part—was still unspeakably beautiful; in the new sections one simply closed one's eyes.⁶² In 1889, when he was past seventy and unable to make long trips, he wrote to Max Alioth: "As you are a Parisian by longing, so am I a Roman, and yet will never more come to Rome, and the Rome which I loved in any case lives no more."⁶³ And to Friedrich von Preen he wrote in 1891 that he still loved Italy painfully.⁶⁴

It is clear from his correspondence that by 1855 he was working on a book about the Italian Renaissance. He wrote from Zurich in that year that he was

under the control of a spirit of scholarly torment that might occupy all his available powers for years. He describes it as the seed of a great investigation in the history of the beautiful, which he had brought back from Italy in the previous year. "And believe me," he continues, "I could not die peacefully if I did not fulfill my destiny in this thing."⁶⁵ At this time he still hoped, apparently, to combine art history and cultural history in one large work. It caused him great distress when the acceptance of the professorship at Basel forced him to reduce the scale of the book.⁶⁶ At that time, he was still finishing what he described as a "rather large literary work."⁶⁷

When the book appeared, he wrote to a friend to whom he was sending a copy that he had been listening to an inner voice while writing it.⁶⁸ Thus Burckhardt's great book on the Renaissance was a very personal expression; in part, at least, it was a confession of what Italy meant to him. From this point of view, he might have regarded the scholarly discussion to which it has given rise as somewhat beside the point. We have his own word for this. Writing to Paul Heyse about the book in the year of its publication, he predicted quite correctly that specialists would criticize it. "But on the other hand," he went on, "fair-minded people with a little sense will perhaps recognize that this book *had* to be written out of inner necessity, even if the world takes no notice of it."⁶⁹

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1. Letter to Heinrich Schreiber, January 2, 1838: Jacob Burckhardt, *Briefe*, ed. Max Burckhardt, Vol. 1 (Basel, 1949), 67. Three volumes of Max Burckhardt's complete edition of the letters of Jacob Burckhardt have appeared, covering the period to March, 1858. (Hereafter cited as *Briefe*). Some of the most interesting passages from Burckhardt's correspondence have been translated and edited by Alexander Dru: *The Letters of Jacob Burckhardt* (London and New York, 1955).

2. *Briefe*, I, 68-70. Italian themes had appeared even earlier in Burckhardt's poems. The poems may be most conveniently studied in Jacob Burckhardt, *Gedichte*, ed. Karl Emil Hoffmann (Basel, 1926). There is no complete edition of the poems.

3. Letter to Johannes Riggenbach, June 11, 1838: *Briefe*, I, 73.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 75.

5. *Gedichte*, pp. 40-51.

6. Letter to Riggenbach, August 26, 1838: *Briefe*, I, 79.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 80.

8. Letter to Riggenbach, August 28, 1838: *ibid.*, p. 83.

9. Letter to Riggenbach, November 9, 1838: *ibid.*, pp. 91-92.

10. Letter to Louise Burckhardt, April 5, 1841: *ibid.*, p. 165.

11. Letter to Eduard Schauenburg, April 15, 1841: *ibid.*, p. 175.

12. Letter to Louise Burckhardt, September 25, 1841: *ibid.*, p. 181.

13. Letter to Gottfried Kinkel, December 30, 1841: *ibid.*, p. 184.

14. Letter to Eduard Schauenburg, June 12, 1841: *ibid.*, p. 178.

15. Letter to Riggenbach, April 10, 1839: *ibid.*, pp. 106-8.

15a. Letter to Friedrich von Tschudi, May 29, 1839: *ibid.*, p. 112.

16. Letter to Tschudi, November 18, 1839: *ibid.*, pp. 126-8.

17. Letter to Albrecht Wolters, July 20, 1843: *ibid.*, II (Basel, 1952), 26.

18. Letter to Gottfried Kinkel, November 24-December 1, 1843: *ibid.*, pp. 50-54.

19. Letter to Eduard Schauenburg, November 30, 1843: *ibid.*, p. 56.

20. Letter to Hermann Schauenburg, June 10, 1844: *ibid.*, p. 99.

21. Letter to Gottfried Kinkel, April 21, 1844: *ibid.*, p. 86.

22. Burckhardt's letters to Friedrich von Preen, written in later years are full of his gloomy predictions. See *Jacob Burckhardt's Briefe an seinen Freund Friedrich von Preen, 1864-1893*, ed. Emil Strauss (Stuttgart and Berlin, 1922); for example, letter of April 26, 1872, pp. 51-2; letter of April 13, 1882, p. 178.

23. Letter to Wilhelm Wackernagel, January 26, 1847: *Briefe*, III (Basel, 1955), 49-53.

24. Letter to Hermann Schauenburg, February 27, 1847: *ibid.*, p. 54.

25. Letter to Gottfried Kinkel, December 10, 1846: *ibid.*, p. 48.
26. Letter to Hermann Schauenburg, before September 14, 1849: *ibid.*, p. 112; letter to same, December 31, 1849: *ibid.*, 123-4.
27. For the split between Burckhardt and Kinkel, and their later relationship, see Werner Kaegi, *Jacob Burckhardt: eine Biographie*, Vol. III (Basel and Stuttgart, 1956), pp. 138-41, 204-14.
28. Burckhardt's account of his first meeting with Hermann Schauenburg is found in his letter to his sister Louise, April 5, 1841: *Briefe*, I, 162-172.
29. Letter to Hermann Schauenburg, August 23, 1848: *ibid.*, III, 104-6.
30. Burckhardt's letters to the Schauenburgs were published, with useful notes, by Julius Schwabe: *Jacob Burckhardt, Briefe und Gedichte an die Brüder Schauenburg* (Basel, 1923).
31. Letter to Louise Burckhardt, July 16, 1840: *Briefe*, I, 154-7.
32. Letter to Gottfried Kinkel, November 29, 1843: *ibid.*, II, 53; letter to Eduard Schauenburg, January 28, 1844: *ibid.*, p. 75; *Gedichte*, p. 102 (poem "Blaue Augen").
33. Letter to Gottfried Kinkel, January 11, 1846: *Briefe*, II, 190.
34. Letter to Gottfried and Johanna Kinkel, September 12, 1846: *ibid.*, III, 38.
35. Letter to Julius Schneider, June 19, 1847: *ibid.*, pp. 74.
36. Kaegi, *op. cit.*, pp. 233-49.
37. *Gedichte*, *passim*. The dialect poems were published in the volume *E Hämpfeli Lieder*, *ibid.*, pp. 109-26.
38. Letter to Eduard Schauenburg, December 31, 1849: *Briefe*, III, 125.
39. Quoted by K. E. Hoffmann, *Gedichte*, p. 159.
40. Letter to Eduard Schauenburg, December 3, 1869: *Briefe und Gedichte an die Brüder Schauenburg*, *op. cit.*, p. 121; letter to Paul Heyse, November 12, 1875: *Der Briefwechsel von Jakob Burckhardt und Paul Heyse*, ed. Erich Petzet (Munich, 1916), pp. 147-8.
41. Letter to Heyse, November 16, 1860: *ibid.*, p. 100.
42. The story of their relationship can be studied in the published correspondence: *ibid.* *passim*.
43. Kaegi, *op. cit.*, p. 769; Wallace K. Ferguson, *The Renaissance in Historical Thought* (Boston, 1948), pp. 183-4.
44. For Marckwart's discussion of Burckhardt's personality, see Otto Markwart, *Jacob Burckhardt: Persönlichkeit und Jugendjahre* (Basel, 1920), pp. 1-167.
45. Letter to Preen, May 30, 1877: *Briefe an . . . Friedrich von Preen*, *op. cit.*, p. 104.
46. Letter to Emanuel Geibel, April 21, 1849: *Briefe*, III, 109.
47. Letter to Friedrich von Tschudi, March 16, 1840: *ibid.*, I, 145; letter to Karl Fresenius, June 19, 1842: *ibid.*, p. 208.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 206.
49. Letter to Friedrich Nietzsche, April 5, 1879: Jacob Burckhardt, *Briefe zur Erkenntnis seiner geistigen Gestalt*, ed. Fritz Kaphahn (Leipzig, 1935), p. 427.
50. Letter to Willibald Beyschlag, January 14, 1844: *Briefe*, II, 62.
51. Some of his complaints about modern art can be found in Jakob Burckhardt, *Briefwechsel mit Heinrich von Geymüller*, ed. Carl Neumann (Munich, 1914); for example the latter of May 19, 1876, p. 56.
52. Letter to Hermann Schauenburg, February 27, 1847: *Briefe*, III, 55. The period after 1830 eventually came to look better to him; see the letter to Preen, December 23, 1871: *Briefe an . . . Friedrich von Preen*, *op. cit.*, pp. 41-2.
53. Letter to Hermann Schauenburg, February 28, 1846: *Briefe*, II, 208.
54. Letter to Ernst Stükelberg, April 2, 1855: *ibid.*, III, 213.
55. Letter to Gottfried and Johanna Kinkel, September 12, 1846: *ibid.*, 37.
56. Letter to Heinrich Schreiber, December 18, 1852: *ibid.*, pp. 172-3.
57. These lines illustrate his feeling:
O nimm, du heissgeliebter Süden!
Den Fremdling auf, den Wandermüden!
Erfülle seine Seele ganz
Mit deinem heitern Sonnenglanz!
From poem, "Was soll mir fürder dieser Norden," *Gedichte*, p. 72.
58. Letter to Eduard Schauenburg, March 25, 1847: *Briefe*, III, 63; letter to Julius Schneider, June 19, 1847: *ibid.*, p. 75.
59. Letter to Karl Fresenius, April 21, 1846: *ibid.*, p. 16.
60. Letter to Eduard Schauenburg, August 13, 1846: *ibid.*, p. 31; letter to Gottfried and Johanna Kinkel, September 12, 1846: *ibid.*, p. 36.
61. Letter to Preen, July 22, 1881: *Briefe an . . . Friedrich von Preen*, *op. cit.*, p. 162. He did not go to Rome on this trip after all, though he did go to Italy: letter to same, August 7, 1881: *ibid.*, p. 169.
62. Letter to Max Alioth, August 23, 1883: Jakob Burckhardt, *Briefe an einen Architekten, 1870-1889*, ed. H. Trog (Munich, 1913), p. 218.
63. Letter to Max Alioth, February 20, 1889: *ibid.*, p. 270.
64. Letter to Preen, December 28, 1891: *Briefe an . . . Friedrich von Preen*, *op. cit.*, p. 279.
65. Letter to Albert Brenner, October 17, 1855: *Briefe*, III, 226.
66. Letter to Paul Heyse, April 9, 1858: *Briefwechsel von Jakob Burckhardt und Paul Heyse*, *op. cit.*, pp. 51-3; letter to same, August 14, 1858: *ibid.*, pp. 70-71.
67. Letter to Wilhelm Vischer, Jr., February 9, 1858: *Briefe*, III, 278.
68. Letter to Emanuel Schärer, September 19, 1860: quoted by Kaegi, *op. cit.*, p. 672.
69. Letter to Heyse, November 16, 1860: *Briefwechsel von Jakob Burckhardt und Paul Heyse*, *op. cit.*, p. 101.



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JACOB BURCKHARDT AS AN ART HISTORIAN

In a well-received book, Wallace Ferguson¹ came to the conclusion that Burckhardt's opinions expressed in the *Civilization of the Renaissance* were partly refuted by the research of the succeeding century. The *Cicerone*, his best known art history work, was revised in ten consecutive editions. Nevertheless, the original unrevised text of both works has survived a whole century. Our refined research methods with microfilm and card index have not been able to replace this favorite reading of undergraduates, more serious tourists, and even scholars. What might be the reason for this most curious phenomenon? I believe the most obvious is that the two books are so utterly different from each other. History, even cultural history, is one thing, and art history is another. Burckhardt was a master of both—he did not like, however, to mix them up. As a matter of fact, he was, after Winckelmann, the first who would see art not as an illustration of history but as a world of its own beside history. Heinrich Wölfflin, his successor in the chair for art history at the University of Basel, puts it this way: "What mattered for Burckhardt was essentially this: to plant the belief that art is one of the major powers in human history and that it is worthwhile to study it not as a scholar but as a human being."²

Burckhardt first visualized the realm of art surrounded by, and at the same time separated from, philosophy on the one hand, and history on the other. In the field of the humanities this is the complex situation that, generation after generation, has provided the most vivid and heated discussions: art, every work of art, every style, is the result of an historical situation as well as of a philosophical position, and still art is neither history nor philosophy.

Burckhardt was not interested in presenting an art theory as such but rather in pointing out what he considered the essential features of the one period in which he felt most at home: the Italian Renaissance. He intends, as he says in the introduction to the *Cicerone*, to draw contours which the experience of the onlooker could fill with vivid, immediate sensation. Burckhardt's discovery in art is *das Anschauliche* which you might translate as immediate, or visual, perception, or as graphic vividness. Here I should like to quote again from Wölfflin: "Great art historians for us are those who have discovered new continents. To Burckhardt belongs the glory of opening the art of the Italian Renaissance to the German intelligentsia. This, however, is not true textually for the works were known and the term was already current in its application to architecture. It is the merit of Burckhardt, however, to have formulated the characteristic concepts. He himself says that he has tried to extract a new and original life from an obsolete aesthetic language. In this often-quoted sentence it is not the words that matter but the new sensibility. This new sensuality, a sensibility of forms, has enabled Burckhardt to redefine the Italian Renaissance. We might believe that little original has been said. Everything seems to be very plain but exactly the most simple thing here represents the most original. An example: concerning the great hall architecture in Raphael's *School of Athens* the text very plainly says: 'How well, how comfortable one would feel in this gallery!' This indicates quite a new perception. Never before was it stated that sensual and spiritual comfort would be the substance of Renaissance architecture. Never before would such

a theory have been admitted in Germany. One was inclined to recognize only the beauty of the so-called 'organic' styles where form and function are identical, as for instance in the Greek temple or in the much-admired Gothic cathedral. The Renaissance did not measure up to such a standard. Too many of its features are primarily agreeable rather than functional. Should one therefore condemn the Renaissance? Never! I believe, says Burckhardt with emphatic opposition, that wherever you find a visual attraction there is an element of beauty. For him there are beautiful planes, beautiful cubes, beautiful spaces which need no other justification than comforting us in pure contemplation. What tastes good must be good. The proportions are considered a basic principle of architecture, not the only one, but among the most decisive and significant. As soon as one realizes that what always matters is the harmony of different proportions in a whole, one also visualizes the rich possibilities of individual expression. The basis is the Noble, Simple, and Great already present in the fifteenth century, attaining a new height in the sixteenth. Burckhardt was the first to enliven with sensitivity the perception of those buildings in which Romanticism could see but the application of cold rules, thus making an original contribution to the understanding of humanism."³

Because of his formal analyses of buildings, sculptures, and pictures, Burckhardt has often been criticized as a formalist without consideration for the higher human values of content and meaning. Nothing could be further from the truth. If one considers art to be a visual language then it would be necessary to study forms, their structure and articulation, colors, space elements, and composition as an indispensable means, not necessarily as an end, of understanding art. How could one hope to decipher the spiritual background of an art work without exploring thoroughly the different formal and visual elements in the foreground? How can one separate altogether form from meaning when form *is* the meaning? If a painting were only an arbitrary illustration of an idea, or of a feeling or even of an event, it would be much clearer and more comprehensible to write an essay, a report, or a book and not to bother veiling them in ambiguous and irrational formal elements. Nobody, I assume, would deny that in order to enjoy in its profoundness a poem by Baudelaire you have not only to be familiar with the common rules of the French language but also to be initiated into its most intimate intricacies. If in the realm of language an inspired translation might help, in the visual arts no such translation exists. The visual elements must be grasped in their order which is *anschaulich* and all the help one can hope for is, as Burckhardt held, to be given some "outlines."

Two examples might suffice to demonstrate that Burckhardt advocated neither formalism nor *l'art pour l'art*: summing up the achievement of Raphael's art, the summit of all, Burckhardt has this to say: "The highest personal quality of Raphael was, as we must repeat in conclusion, not aesthetic but moral in its nature, namely, the great honesty and the strong will with which he at all times strove after the beauty which at the time he recognised as the highest."⁴ And even more specifically about Raphael's Vatican frescoes: "Next to the ceiling of the Sistine chapel, the *Camera della Segnatura*, which was painted almost exactly at the same time, is the first extensive work of art entirely harmonious in form and idea. The best Florentines of the fifteenth century (with the exception of

Leonardo) had accessories (subordinate personages, superfluous motives of drapery, splendid backgrounds, etc.); their figures neutralize each other by their number; their marked characteristics divide the accents too evenly over the whole. . . . Raphael is the first in whom the form is entirely beautiful, noble, and at the same time intellectually alive, without injury to the whole effect. No detail comes forward, is too prominent; the artist understands exactly the delicate life of his great symbolic subjects, and knows how easily the special interest can outweigh the whole; nevertheless, his single figures have become the most valuable field of study of all subsequent painting. No better advice can be given than to contemplate them as often and as fully as possible, and to learn them by heart according to one's capacity. The treatment of the draperies, the expression of movement in them, the gradation of colours and lights, offer an inexhaustible source of pleasure."⁵

Thus, immediate visuality forms the real center of Burckhardt's position. By analyzing single works of his favorite High Renaissance artists he attains what he calls "the harmonious" (das Harmonische). The High Renaissance can be considered classic because the harmony is there, at its greatest height in a single work as well as denominator of the whole stylistic period. From there Burckhardt quite logically can proceed to setting up a whole sequence of styles. Always staying within the *Anschauliche* he visualizes the early Renaissance as the period in which the all-over harmony of forms has not fully developed; and very soon after Raphael's death he finds a certain decline, a lessening of harmony, the period now called Mannerism. Burckhardt might be considered the first to discover and analyze the principles of the following Baroque period even if he could not appreciate it in all its consequences.⁶ It is interesting to notice in this connection that although the history of literature has followed in many instances the stylistic methods developed first in art history, it has not always made up its mind, a hundred years after Burckhardt, when the Renaissance is really over. Do we not still see today works of the seventeenth or eighteenth century included in Renaissance literary studies?

Although Burckhardt was most at home in the periods of the Italian Renaissance and of antiquity, it was really his universality that enabled him to see a single work in the framework of its whole period, and the period, in turn, as a link in the entire sequence of Western art. His published lectures can give an idea of his tremendous curiosity. But, as Waetzoldt⁷ has pointed out, this universality of interests never impelled him to amass a collection of facts and dates and attributions and tangible qualities that is characteristic for the connoisseur; it is rather the versatility of a lover, of a dilettante, in the best sense, who never stopped pursuing artistic and spiritual values in life. He detested everything based on power, quantity, and mass. That is why he distrusted the State, which, according to him, has a real and non-hypocritical interest only in armies and taxes but not in intellectual achievements. Along with his universality this detachment is perhaps the most characteristic feature of Burckhardt's mind—the ever-growing detachment from the people and events that crowded around him—detachment from contemporary art—detachment finally from himself and from his own youth. He never returned to his own works once they were published and left to others the care of subsequent editions. Although he was never the exclusive Italianist some

observers want him to be, he more and more turned away from the Romanticism of his earlier days when he studied German cathedrals as monuments of German ideals and greatness along with the pre-1848 patriots.

Does not this peculiar mixture of independence, universality and detachment in the recluse of Basel remind one of the character of his colleague of 350 years before in the same city, the humanist Erasmus?

Because Burckhardt never participated in the critical discussions of the day, never published articles in learned journals, and never haggled over attributions of particular art works (he did not care about Baptists or Anabaptists, as he put it) he was never criticized or attacked during his lifetime. He kept himself apart from the two major trends of growing art history research, the pragmatists, the investigators of facts and dates and details on the one hand, and those who could see in art only the history of ideas on the other.

The criticism against Burckhardt was levelled only indirectly and post-humously against his successor Heinrich Wölfflin who, in following up some of his teacher's ideas, formulated a program of *art history without names*. Not the biography of an artist nor even the monograph is, according to this theory, in the foreground of artistic explanation, but rather the art work itself within a given stylistic sequence. Burckhardt, as well as Wölfflin, never denied that it takes the individuality of a painter to paint a painting—the former studied the art of Rubens and the latter that of Dürer most thoroughly—but the point is whether the emphasis should be on the genetic, psychological, sociological, and biographical or on the structural and visual aspects of art. Again, it is not a matter of excluding technical, cultural, or sociological implications but of establishing what comes first and what is derivative in order to avoid false perspectives.

Arnold Hauser, the most recent and very eloquent critic, a Marxist with a special Budapest flavor⁸ denies any “inner causation” in art and thus takes us right into the center of the issue. For him art is conditioned by so many external social factors that he cannot see, let alone admit, an artistic autonomy. He is right, no doubt, in pointing out the relations of art, in a given period, to literature, society, philosophy, and religion. We should have more and better studies of the interrelations of the arts and society. It is, however, one thing to look at painting and sculpture *from the outside* and assume an outer causation between art and society. (However much we may be tempted to see an analogy between the Counter-Reformation and Baroque art in general, the transmission belt is quite shaky when it comes to concrete situations.) It is another thing to conceive art *from the inside*, realize the inner causation, the comprehensive irreversible pattern in stylistic changes. Most revealing is the phenomenon of our own time when a whole generation acquires a new “vision” in paintings of abstract figuration, a development that can be traced back at least to Seurat and Cézanne and which may be followed over eighty years now, step by step.

The view from without and the one from within are, to be sure, both valid. Art is, at the same time, *illustration* of an outside content and *formation* of an autonomous visual order. The enormous and decisive difference, however, is that once you have trained your visual abilities, once you have realized the life of forms you can from there stretch out toward the background, cultural, religious, sociological, etc. without much risk of losing your way. The direction from the

inside out is a good one to take. But the opposite approach of starting with the content that is illustrated, is in the greatest danger of never reaching art as art at all, is in danger of missing one of the finest human experiences and, worst of all, of spreading aesthetic blindness.

Burckhardt, after Winckelmann, was the first to visualize this predicament and became the guide, the *cicerone*, who would give to Northern Europeans a true "outline for enjoyment of art works," as the subtitle of his work states. Italians, of course, are in no need of such a help for they seem born with an artistic sense.

If the *Cicerone*, with the publishing date of 1855, is the work that made Burckhardt well known to a wider public, and incidentally secured for him the first chair for art history at the newly-founded Swiss Federal Technical University in Zürich, his second work on art history, *Die Baukunst der Renaissance in Italien*, of 1867, unjustly has stayed in the background and, by the way, has never been translated into English. It does not address itself to a wider public, it is not written in what one would call an entertaining style, and it treats the least popular of the arts, architecture. Looking back to his lifework on his 75th birthday, Burckhardt stated himself that his intellectual legacy was to study art history by problems. Here in *Die Baukunst* he illustrates his idea.

The Renaissance is more or less considered as a unit. The material is not presented lengthwise, chronologically, but horizontally and systematically. He considers different types of buildings such as churches, longitudinal and centralized types, monasteries, palaces in their Tuscan, Roman, or Venetian variety, regular and irregular plans, varieties of staircases, also the planning of gardens, theories of construction of villas, ideas on town planning, etc. Other chapters include the treatment of structural as well as decorative forms in the Early and High Renaissance: the development of columns, arches, engaged pilasters, entablatures, classical and revised architectural orders, and, related to it the unfolding of a comprehensive literature on architectural theory, the revival of Vitruvius, and even a section discussing the rendering of buildings in Renaissance paintings. There are other sections treating the so-called proto-Renaissance during the Middle Ages as well as fifteen chapters on art patronage and its motivation by a sense of glory or piety, learnedness or dilettantism on the part of protectors, builders, and their advisors. The special feature of the book is the inclusion of a very detailed contemporary source-material not duplicated anywhere else. Supplementing the enjoyment-directed *Cicerone*, addressing an educated public, the *Baukunst* is a basic book for art historians. It cannot, however, be used as a reference work because, again, the individual figures retreat and, to quote the author himself: "What comes to the fore are the propelling forces which dominated the art as a whole, and the given situation which conditioned the individual artists."

The rather intuitive vision of the Renaissance that Burckhardt had presented in the *Cicerone* is here backed up by an almost overwhelming completeness of documentary material. The most astonishing result is that one is not left with a confusing agglomeration of details, but throughout one sees clearly the paths that lead from the early to the mature phase of the Renaissance, to simplification of details, to more vigorous forms, increased contrasts and more refined interplay of proportions.

"Burckhardt's system, then, deals with artistic problems rather than artistic form,"⁹ as Joseph Gantner, the present holder of Burckhardt's chair in Basel, so aptly sums it up. Burckhardt himself planned to treat the painting and sculpture of the Italian Renaissance along the same lines, but with his ever-growing aversion to publishing, the books were never completed and the only document to indicate his ideas on those subjects is a posthumously published volume¹⁰ in which he treats the *Altar Picture*, the *Portrait*, and the *Collectors*, as installments of his "painting by problems."

Strangely enough, these promising suggestions were never taken up, as the humanist of Basel did not leave a school. His successor, Wölfflin, followed a somewhat different path developing a system of forms of artistic perception. The history of Renaissance painting and sculpture "by problems" is still to be written.

Only one major work on the Italian Renaissance art from the pen of Max Dvorák¹¹ may, in general, claim a derivation from Burckhardt's methods but it is so drenched in Neo-Medievalism and Expressionism (1920!) that it really belongs in another context and cannot be discussed here. On the other hand, a recent paperback has summed up our present knowledge on Renaissance art "by problems" following Burckhardt's pattern.¹² Paatz's publication might be the first symptom of a Burckhardt renaissance for which some scholars are looking. Nor should Geoffrey Scott's *Architecture of Humanism*¹³ be overlooked. It appears to be the only study in English which fights with Burckhardt's weapons.

Because he dared to put the emphasis of his research on understanding artistic achievements rather than on factual material, Burckhardt's work will not easily grow stale. We are justified in evaluating him not so much as an historic figure but rather as the initiator of a new vision that met with richest fulfillment in the Italian Renaissance and in classic antiquity. His message is that, in studying art, one's first attention should be given, more or less intuitively, to the exploration of artistic-visual phenomena, to then be followed by methodical and scientific research. Wherever people are interested in art history, one group will give stronger emphasis to the artistic, another to the historic aspect. Burckhardt made a good case for the former.

In his own period he could single-handedly sway so many educated readers because he had a rich and powerful language at his command and, moreover, his hour seemed to have arrived as far as general intellectual developments were concerned. The events of 1848 had had a tremendous sobering effect in many realms of life: the dream of a greater Democracy had gone, and with it, the enthusiasm for the idolized Romantic past. Burckhardt himself had seen the tail-end of it during his stay in Berlin in those years. Here had he witnessed the success of Carl Schnaase's *History of the Fine Arts*,¹⁴ a panoramic view of history, art, philosophy, and religion of all periods, designed to explain the predominant rôle of the national (*Volksgeist*) and racial (*Rassenstil*) characters in the make-up of the arts. In this situation our "Köbi" no doubt, had experienced his own 1848, his own disillusion, his own detachment from the dreams of his youth. Two years later he took his decisive trip to Italy, seven years later the *Cicerone* was published.

Two major approaches to art, art as the history of ideas on the one hand, and art as visual history on the other, came here to a dramatic confrontation. In

different wrappings and with changing emphasis, they have appeared and disappeared during a century of research in the history of art. In the age of Expressionism and Surrealism the recent generation of scholars, particularly on the American scene, was especially interested in the importance of meaning, symbols, and iconography for art. If this trend has about run its course in the Abstract Expressionism of our day, as some observers believe, a way would be open for a new form of representation, and in the history of art, since these currents often go together, a revival of Burckhardt's ideas would be in order.

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1. *Renaissance in Historical Thought*, Boston, 1948.
2. Heinrich Wölfflin, *Gedanken zur Kunstgeschichte*, Basel, 1941, p. 155.
3. Heinrich Wölfflin, *Gedanken zur Kunstgeschichte*, pp. 138-39.
4. *Cicerone*, London Edition, p. 164.
5. *Cicerone*, London Edition, pp. 152-53.
6. Burckhardt, to be sure, used, especially in his earlier writings, the term Rococo but in the sense of what is now called baroque.
7. Wilhelm Waetzoldt, *Deutsche Kunsthistoriker*, Leipzig, 1924, Band II, pp. 173-75.
8. *The Philosophy of Art History*, New York, 1959.
9. Joseph Gantner, *Burckhardt-Wölfflin Briefwechsel*, Basel, 1948.
10. Burckhardt, *Beiträge zur Kunstgeschichte von Italien*, Basel, 1898.
11. Max Dvorák, *Geschichte der Italienischen Kunst im Zeitalter der Renaissance*, Munich, 1927.
12. Walter Paatz, *Die Kunst der Renaissance in Italien*, Stuttgart, 1953.
13. London, 1914. Recently reprinted as paperback.
14. *Geschichte der bildenden Künste*, since 1843.

Renaissance Art in the Museum Collections

*An exhibition organized in honor of the meeting of
the Central Renaissance Society at Lawrence on
April 28-30, 1960.*



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THE UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS MUSEUM OF ART

APRIL 28-JUNE 8, 1960

LAWRENCE



INTRODUCTION

Burckhardt's book on the Renaissance in Italy has become, during the hundred years since its publication, not only an inspiration for inquiry into the period, but also a starting point for research into the period's art history, extending far beyond the boundaries set by the author, roughly the period between the death of Dante and that of Michelangelo. Indeed, the "decline" which Burckhardt felt began with the second half of the century, today rehabilitated under the name of "Mannerism," actually represents in varying degrees of quality and expression, the ultimate spread of Italian stylistic ideas throughout the Continent, becoming, for the art historian, the successor to the Late Gothic as an "international style."

This exhibition, which presents almost every outstanding work in the Museum collections pertinent to the problems and issues represented by Burckhardt, deals not with such works as are traditionally used to illustrate de-luxe editions of his book, for they are either *in situ* or in the great galleries of the world. Instead it suggests that his ideas on the great beginning of the modern age can be found in every work of art, from painting to portrait medal, from the works of the Florentine fifteenth century to those of Austria at the very end of the sixteenth. And under scrutiny, these works indeed reveal that they are bound together with the great masterpieces by that same *aurea catena Homeri* which can be, depending on the point of view, any one of those themes with which Burckhardt dealt in *Die Cultur der Renaissance*: the growth of secular knowledge, the revival of antiquity, the humanization of religion, the developing sense of the uniqueness of the individual, or what you will. Thus to modern research the Renaissance cannot end with the death of Michelangelo—only one aspect of it can. The work of Elizabethan England, of a Germany transformed by the followers of Dürer and Luther, of Rudolfinian Prague and Vienna, forms as important a link in that golden chain which binds an age together, as does any earlier work of art.

Although one traditionally finds that architecture, painting and sculpture are considered the finest vehicles of artistic thought, today the art historian realizes that the very major "minor arts" are often even more vivid expressions of an artistic epoch. Hence such a "painting" in this exhibition as the great enamel plate from Limoges, presents to us the most lavish, and perhaps clearest expression of the ideas of the Italian Renaissance, as they were understood and utilized in the France of Francis I. Its hard brilliance and sophisticated complexity finds its counterpart in the "enamelled" surface of the Bronzino portrait, in spite of the difference in medium. Equally interesting are the medieval survivals, existing beside the renaissance "revivals": a *retardataire* painter, such as Neri di Bicci, inviolate in his impeccable craftsmanship, next to the less able, but how much more "progressive" Innocenzo da Imola. The nascent humanism of Sassetta's Archangel Gabriel, crowned with olive like a strange Siennese Christian Virgil, the bucolic charm of the bronze market girl, or the studied, graceful, revulsion of the ivory Judith, all attest to ideas that were new, were a part of a re-birth, or at least of the birth of a mode of seeing, and thus of thinking.

Thus, rather than provide some sort of visual panorama of an important historical period, a university art collection can, instead, present significant facets of the artistic endeavor of a certain time. Lifted out of context though they may

be, they can, at least, be studied and enjoyed as unique visual experiences and may serve, juxtaposed, as the source of new insights into the relationships between the visual languages of different times and places within a given epoch.

To be sure, there are significant areas in which our collections reveal serious *lacunae*, such as the all-important one of Renaissance ceramics, or that of Renaissance drawings. Yet, it is hoped, assuming that the rate of growth in the field of Renaissance art which the Museum has experienced recently continues (the Kress Study Collection!) that someday the productions of Cafaggiolo, of Urbino and Faenza, and, if not the drawings of Raphael or Pontormo, at least those of Luca Penni or Polidoro da Caravaggio will also be on hand to further enrich our holdings in this field.

It is fully in accord with the spirit of Jacob Burckhardt, then, that such an exhibition as this represent a field for study, an array of problems, not solutions, for it is as much an "experiment," as much an "essay," as was his own first great work.

EDWARD A. MASER
The Museum of Art
The University of Kansas

CATALOGUE OF THE EXHIBITION

PAINTINGS

1. Agnolo Bronzino (1503-1572)
A Florentine Lady as the Magdalene
Oil on panel. H. 23½" x W. 19"
Italy (Florence)
2. Anton Woensam of Worms (before 1500-1541)
The Agony in the Garden
Oil on panel. H. 31⅛" x W. 59½"
Germany, School of Cologne
The Samuel H. Kress Study Collection
3. Bernardo Zenale (1436-1526)
Madonna and Saints (or Ecclesia adored by Saints)
Oil on panel, H. 50¾" x W. 24⅞"
Italy (Lombardy)
The Samuel H. Kress Study Collection
4. 'Cola dell' Amatrice (1489-1559)
Four Prophets—Jonah, Jeremiah, Elijah, Zachariah
Oil on panel. H. 43" x W. 24"
Italy (Abruzzi)
5. England. Early 17th Century
Lord Thomas Egerton
Oil on canvas. H. 35" x 30½"
6. Flemish Follower of Vasari
Calvary
Tempera on panel. H. 22½" x W. 16½"
Flanders, 16th Century
7. Giovanni Martini da Udine (died 1535)
St. Anthony of Padua
Oil on canvas. H. 43¼" x W. 22½"
Northern Italy
Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Hugo Emmerich, New York
8. Hans Rottenhammer (1564-1625)
Martyrdom of St. Sebastian
Oil on copper. H. 12¼" x W. 8½"
Germany
9. Innocenzo Francucci "da Imola" (1494-1550)
The Martyrdom of St. Catherine
Oil on panel. H. 7" x W. 16½"
North Italy (Romagna)
10. Italy (Lombardy), Early 16th Century
Madonna and Child with St. John
Oil on panel. H. 26⅛" x W. 20⅞"
The Samuel H. Kress Study Collection



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11. Master of the "Apollini Sacrum"
Scene from a Classic Legend
Tempera on panel. H. 18½" x W. 59½"
Italy (Florence), 15th Century
The Samuel H. Kress Study Collection
12. Neri di Bicci (1419-about 1491)
St. Bartholemew and St. James the Great
Tempera on panel. H. 48½" x W. 30¼"
Italy (Florence)
The Samuel H. Kress Study Collection
13. Stefano di Giovanni, called "Sassetta" (Studio?)
(first mentioned 1423-1450)
Head of the Angel Gabriel
Tempera on panel. Diameter: 8¾"
Italy (Siena)
The Samuel H. Kress Study Collection

SCULPTURE (including small bronzes)

14. Andrea Briosco "Il Riccio" (1470-1532)
Vulcan
Bronze. H. 55⅞"
Italy (Padua)
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Jack Linsky, New York
15. Andrea della Robbia (Workshop?) (1435-1525)
A Sainted Monk
Glazed terracotta, H. 33¼"
Italy (Florence)
16. Adrian de Vries (1560-1626)
Equestrian Statue of Emperor Rudolf II
Bronze. H. 19" (with base)
Flanders
Gift of the Solon Summerfield Fund
17. Domenico Gagini (first mentioned 1448-1492)
St. John the Baptist in the Desert Surrounded by Four Angels
Marble. H. 16½" x W. 44⅞"
Italy (Lombardy)
The Samuel H. Kress Study Collection
18. Flemish Follower of Giovanni Bologna
Market Girl
Bronze. H. 77⅞"
Flanders, Late 16th Century
19. Giovanni da Bologna (1529-1608)
St. Luke the Evangelist
Bronze. H. 11"
Italy (Florence)
20. Hans Waldburger (1570-1630)
St. Peter
Polychromed wood. H. 57"
Austria (Salzburg)
21. Italy, Mid-16th Century
Calvary
Marble relief. H. 9¾" x W. 10"
Gift of Irwin Untermyer, New York



22. Leonhard Kern (?) (1588-1662)
Two Armorial Figures
Alabaster. H. 18½"
Germany (Middle Rhine)
23. Ludovico Cardi, "il Cigoli" (1559-1613) (Workshop)
Anatomical Figure
Bronze. H. 13" (with original base)
Italy (Florence)
24. Master B. G.
Judith and Holofernes
Ivory. H. 7¾"
Germany, Late 16th Century
25. Pierino da Vinci (about 1521-about 1551)
Profile Bust of a Girl
Marble. H. 23¼" x W. 18⅝"
Italy (Florence)
The Samuel H. Kress Study Collection

MEDALS AND PLAQUETTES

26. Antonio Pisanello (c. 1395-1455/6)
Portrait of Novello Malatesta
Bronze medal. Diameter: 3¼"
North Italy (Rimini)
27. Guillaume Dupre (1574-1647)
Portraits of Henri IV and Marie de' Medici
Bronze medal (obverse). Diameter: 8 7/16"
France. Dated 1605
28. Hans Reinhardt the Elder (1517-1581)
The Sacrifice of Isaac
Silver medallion. Diameter: 3 3/16"
Germany
Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Franklin D. Murphy, Lawrence
29. Hans van Aachen (1552-1616)
The Crucifixion
Gilt bronze relief. H. 15½" x W. 9¼"
Germany
30. Jacopo Sansovino (1486-1570)
The Holy Family
Polychromed bronze relief. H. 6⅝" x W. 4"
Italy (Florence)
31. Niccolo Fiorentino (attributed to) (1430-1514)
Portrait of Cosimo de' Medici "the Elder"
Bronze medal. Diameter: 27/8"
Italy (Florence)
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Simon Hurwitz, Lawrence
32. Tobias Wolff (first mentioned 1561)
The Electors of Braudenburg and Saxony
Silver medal. Diameter: 3½"
Germany (Saxony)



PRINTS

33. Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528)
The Woman of Light (from the Apocalypse of St. John)
Woodcut, Bartsch 73; Meder 177
Germany (Nürnberg)
34. Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528)
The Angel with the Sudarium
Etching, Bartsch 26; Meder 27. H. 7¼" x W. 5¼"
Germany (Nürnberg)
35. Albrecht Dürer 1471-1528)
The Great Triumphal Car of Emperor Maximilian I
Woodcut (8 plates), Bartsch 139; Meder 252
Germany (Nürnberg), the Latin edition, 1523
36. Nicolo della Casa (Nicole de Maison) (active in Rome 1543-1548)
Portrait of the Florentine Sculptor Baccio Bandinelli
Engraving, dated 1548
French (Lorraine—Rome)

DECORATIVE ARTS

37. Andrea Briosco "Il Riccio" (1470-1532)
Lukewell in form of a Crab
Gilt bronze. H. 15⅞" x W. 6¼"
Italy (Padua)
Gift of Allen Gerdau, New York
38. *Carved Coconut Cup set in Silver*
Dutch (Leyden?), early 16th Century, H. 10"
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Jack Linsky, New York
39. *Cassone* ("Marriage Chest")
Carved walnut. H. 26" x W. 72"
Italy (Florence?)
The William Bridges Thayer Memorial Collection
40. Master I. C.
The Crossing of the Red Sea
Enamelled plate. H. 13¼" x W. 18¼"
France (Limoges), Second half of the 16th Century
41. *Tapestry representing a Tiger Hunt*
Wool and silk
Flanders, Late 16th Century
Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Hugo Emmerich, New York
42. *Throne*
Carved and inlaid walnut
Italy (Siena?). Late 15th Century. H. 101¼"
Gift of Mr. Eugen Grabschied, New York



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